JERRY TODD IN THE WHISPERING CAVE

BY LEO EDWARDS

5/25

A Merry Christmas
to Ferris Woodruff
from Grandma Primmer
Dec 25th / 1929

JERRY TODD IN THE WHISPERING CAVE

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/jerrytoddinwhisp0000leoe

SAY, IT WAS THE BIGGEST KETTLE I EVER SET EYES ON.

Jerry Todd in the Whispering Cave *Frontispiece* (*Page* 203)

JERRY TODD
IN THE WHISPERING CAVE

BY

LEO EDWARDS

AUTHOR OF
THE JERRY TODD BOOKS
THE POPPY OTT BOOKS, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED BY

BERT SALG

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS : : NEW YORK

Made in the United States of America

COPYRIGHT, 1927, BY
GROSSET & DUNLAP

To

ALFRED D. MOORE

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	The Vanished Lizard	1
II	At the Banquet	14
III	Heading Into Unknown Adventures	26
IV	Shipwrecked	39
V	The Hidden Cave	49
VI	Smarty Orders Us Out	56
VII	The Stolen Shoes	62
VIII	Cannibals!	72
IX	The Whispering Voice	80
X	Trapped in the Cave	89
XI	The Sleeping Toe	107
XII	In Steam Corners	119
XIII	The Hidden Fortune	137
XIV	The Cave's Secret	150
XV	Underground Explorations	158
XVI	The Bee Tree	168
XVII	An Exciting Night	180
XVIII	More "Cannibal" Stuff	190
XIX	The King of England	199
XX	Prisoners	213
XXI	The Sneezing Pirates	226
XXII	Back Home Again	233

JERRY TODD SAYS:

Can you imagine a man hunting eleven years for a certain kind of lizard? Well, that is what Professor Hebberloom Clatterby did. And such a queer old man as he was! He had a lot of scientific *A.B., LL.D.* and *P.D.Q.* stuff hitched to his name. But, say, outside of lizards—and his object in coming to Tutter was to write a book on lizards—he didn't know beans.

Having rescued him on Oak Island, we grinned at his lingo, for in talking to us he used all of the big words in the dictionary. Yet, how peachy were the lizard-hunt stories that he told us that night beside the campfire!

Then came the mystery of his "vanished" *Heloderma*—only *we* knew that the big lizard's peculiar owner had made it "vanish." What therefore was his secret? Why did he look daggers at me the night when Peg Shaw called up on the telephone to tell me about the big bee tree that he had found on Oak Island, where later

on we were shipwrecked in true "Swiss Family Robinson" style, tub raft and all?

Gee, it gives a fellow a real thrill to be shipwrecked. And, to that point, how well I remember my own happy feelings that day as we sailed across the wide waters to the island where the bee tree was. We imagined that it was an island in the middle of the ocean, soon to be ours by right of discovery. And we planned how we were going to build tree houses and ride tamed buffaloes, just as the Robinson boys had done on their island. Yes, we even talked of fighting cannibals. But did I ever dream of the crazy "cannibal" adventure that I was going to tumble into? Hardly!

Yes, there's a pile of fun and excitement in this story. I think you'll like it. And when you have read it, if you want more stories of the same kind, full of fun and mystery, why not try my earlier books, in the order that they were published:

(1) JERRY TODD AND THE WHISPERING MUMMY

(2) JERRY TODD AND THE ROSE-COLORED CAT

(3) JERRY TODD AND THE OAK ISLAND TREASURE

(4) JERRY TODD AND THE WALTZING HEN

(5) JERRY TODD AND THE TALKING FROG

(6) JERRY TODD AND THE PURRING EGG

We solve a whopping big "vanished-mummy" mystery in my first book. Mummy itch! Ever have it? *We* did! . . . In the "Rose-Colored Cat" book we have our trials with a "feline rest farm"—a sort of sanitarium for rich people's cats . . . In the "Oak Island Treasure" book we set ourselves up in the show business, finding that we can run a show almost as good as P. T. Barnum! And did we make money? I'll tell the world! We had a smashing big "buried-treasure" adventure, too . . . In the "Waltzing Hen" book you'll meet old Cap'n Tinkertop and his hilarious dancing leg. Why does the hen waltz? What is the secret of the yellow face? . . . In the "Talking Frog" book we help a boy pal save a peculiar invention of his father's from thieving hands. What is the shabby old soap peddler searching for, night after night, in the vanished miser's old mill? What does "ten and ten" mean? . . . In the "Purring Egg" book we set about to hatch a "rejuvenated" dodo egg that came out of King Tut's tomb. The egg "hatches," all right! And did we end up with the anticipated million-dollar dodo bird? Well,

if you want some real fun you had better read the story and thus find out for yourself.

Oh, yes, I want to say a few words about Poppy Ott, too. He's the new boy with whom we got mixed up in that "Stuttering Parrot" mystery that the Tutter people are still chuckling over. Just as I have written the JERRY TODD books about myself, I've also written some similar books about Poppy. Here they are:

(1) POPPY OTT AND THE STUTTERING PARROT

(2) POPPY OTT'S SEVEN-LEAGUE STILTS

(3) POPPY OTT AND THE GALLOPING SNAIL

(4) POPPY OTT'S PEDIGREED PICKLES

And look for me soon in still another fun-mystery-adventure story, JERRY TODD, PIRATE.

JERRY TODD IN THE WHISPERING CAVE

CHAPTER I

THE VANISHED LIZARD

WITH the newspapers all over the country printing such big articles about Professor Hebberloom Clatterby and his wonderful *Heloderma,* you can imagine how excited we were when word got around among the Tutter kids that the celebrated scientist was going to stop in our town on a visit.

Of course, what we wanted to see more than the famous lizard hunter, himself, was the big *Heloderma* that he carried around in a special metal-lined box. According to the newspaper articles, the *Heloderma,* a sort of connecting link between the present reptile world and what it used to be thousands of years ago, had been captured in a desolate part of Arizona only after

eleven years of constant scientific search, and hence was considered to be worth not less than ten thousand dollars. I could see what made it valuable, all right. Still, as I told our leader, Scoop Ellery, if given a choice between the rare lizard and ten thousand dollars, I'd take the money. Scoop, though, kind of leaned toward the big lizard. For, in his businesslike way, he had an idea in his head that he could start a show and clear up a whole lot more than ten thousand dollars. And, to that point, probably he could. For he's a pretty smart kid, let me tell you.

What brought the Professor to Tutter was Mrs. Amanda Tiff, the fat bee woman who lives next door to Scoop on Oak Street. A widow, with a line of gab like a runaway talking machine, Mrs. Tiff's bee business, as started by her husband, is the biggest thing of its kind in the county. Her back yard is full of beehives. One June I worked for her to earn spending money for the Fourth-of-July and cleverly upset a loaded beehive on top of myself. Wough! I'll never forget *that!* The town kids all wanted to know who gave me the black eye.

There were a lot of lively preparations in Mrs. Tiff's home for the coming Professor. First, the

whole house was cleaned from top to bottom. Then, several pieces of new furniture were brought in, including a writing desk. We wondered at the new desk until the excited bee woman, in running over to borrow Mrs. Ellery's curtain stretchers, gabbily confided to her neighbor that the distinguished vistor was going to write a book called *Lizards of the Pre-Glacial Period,* on which he had been making notes and gathering scientific material for more than forty years. Gee! Forty years on one book! I couldn't help but think of my own books. When it came to a matter of *speed,* I had him beat a mile.

Then the day came for the Professor to breeze in . . . but he didn't come! Nor did he show up the next day, either. After all her hard work and neighborhood advertising, Mrs. Tiff was terribly put out about it. She wisely had bought the writing desk on short approval, so, after waiting three days, she sent it back to the furniture store, telling them that she might need it later on, and again she might not.

It began to look to us as though we weren't going to see the famous *Heloderma* and its scientific trainer, after all. However, our disappointment was soon lost in the fun of paddling around

in the canal in Scoop's new canoe, which came by express the day the writing desk took up its old parking place in the furniture store. Then we got our heads together—Scoop and I and Peg Shaw—and planned an overnight trip to Oak Island.

If you have read my book, JERRY TODD AND THE OAK ISLAND TREASURE, you'll remember the exciting time we had on the lonely canal island, trying to dig up the buried treasure and fight the enemy at the same time. Recalling these thrilling adventures, we thought it would be fun to go back there for a few hours. Then, too, it was Peg's intention to stay up in that neck of the woods for a week or two and do some visiting. Do you remember the lock tender in my "Oak Island Treasure" story? Well, an uncle of our big chum's had that job now. And it was old hefty's scheme to stick around up there and help his relative put the canal tugs and barges through the lock. It would be a lot of fun, he thought.

It took us almost three hours to make the trip from Tutter to the island, which I'll describe more in detail later on. And landing, after having picked up a floating oar, what was our surprise to find the lost Professor there! Yes, sir,

while Mrs. Tiff was back home fretting and stewing her head off, the delayed visitor had been putting on a special lizard hunt, having come here in a big rowboat from Steam Corners, five miles farther east. Headed for Tutter on the train, some joker had handed him the wonderful tip that there were lizards on the canal island two feet long, after which, of course, he couldn't get here fast enough, though, as you can imagine, the only lizards that he had found on the island were about the size of his big toe. And on top of his wasted time, if we hadn't happened along just when we did, I don't know what would have become of him. For having lost the oar that we had found, he was as helpless as a baby. *Him* rig up an oar? Say, with all due respect to the *A.B., LL.D.,* and *P.D.Q.* stuff hitched to his name, he couldn't have rigged up a wooden leg for a crippled fire cracker. Nor had it percolated into his one-sided "scientific" mind that he could push his loaded boat with a long willow pole. No, he was completely hung up, and if we hadn't dropped in, I actually believe that he would have starved to death. Yet, hungry as he was, he still had "lizards" on the brain.

"I greatly fear," he told us, innocent of the joke that had been played on him, "that the ac-

count given to me of the *Lacerta agilis,* as peculiarly and abundantly native to these parts, has been grieviously exaggerated."

"What's the *Lacerta agilis?*" inquired Scoop. "A second cousin to the *Heloderma?*"

"Our biological premise hardly permits us to place the relationship so definitely as that," came thoughtfully, as the scientist, taking the question seriously, weighed the matter in his mind to a perfect balance. "However, though we know that the *Lacerta agilis* is provincially European, the two species, of course, are more or less distantly related. And, to that point, I had hoped that my work here would be productive of results that would enable me to more definitely establish the relationship, not only between the *Lacerta agilis* and the *Lacerta vivipara,* but also between the *Lacerta vivipara* and the *Lacerta viridis.* So you can imagine my disappointment in having found none of the extraordinary specimens as credited to the locality. Nor have I seen any tracks or other evidences of any specimens worthy of scientific recording, to the result that I now find myself wondering if I might not have misconstrued my informant's directions."

"If he said Oak Island," nodded Scoop, "this is the place."

"But . . . my word! If this is indeed the correct place, then he was hopelessly misinformed. For I assure you that my diligent and painstaking search has met with not the slightest reward."

Reminded by this big talk of the other tall, willowy "Professor" who started the cat farm in Tutter, as written down in my book, JERRY TODD AND THE ROSE-COLORED CAT, we stood there grinning from ear to ear. Such a queer old man! It hardly seemed possible that he was as smart as the newspapers said. Still, was our conclusion, he must know his onions, as the saying is, for certainly Mrs. Tiff wouldn't have made so much fuss over his coming visit if he had been sort of "cracked." I guess not! Instead of broadcasting to the neighbors, she would have sneaked him in the back door.

We asked him then about the *Heloderma,* learning that the boxes in the rowboat contained more than seven hundred lizards of various kinds and sizes. Our interest in his work seemed to please him, and teetering like an old long-legged fussbudget, he carried the biggest box to shore and unlocked it.

It was then that we named the big lizard General Debility, for that was easier to say than *Heloderma.* Boy, as the newspapers had pic-

tured, it was *some* lizard. Almost four feet long, it looked more like a husky young alligator than a lizard. And for decorations it had rough scales all over its thick, squat body. The way the wicked beady eyes watched us gave me the creeps. And when we were told that its bite was poisonous, like a rattlesnake's, we didn't try and get fresh on short acquaintance and do any chin-tickling stuff. Hardly! I would as soon have thought of shoving my arm into the iron jaws of a corn shredder. Even as I guardedly leaned over the box, more than a yard from the big mouth, I had the feeling that I was in danger.

This unexpected meeting with the old scientist sort of changed our plans about exploring the island, for it was more fun to watch him feed his lizards, and things like that, than it was to run up and down hill. Supper over, we built a big campfire on the sandy south shore. And thus reminded of other campfires on the Arizona deserts, the wordy scientist told us stories of exciting lizard hunts that kept us up until after ten o'clock. These stories sure were interesting, but I'll have to admit that they were bad for a fellow's dreams!

We had told the old man, of course, that we were from the same town where his relative lived.

And thus learning that he could get to Tutter by way of the canal, he decided not to go back to Steam Corners to finish his journey on the train. So, when breakfast was over the following morning, we helped him off, finding that it was kind of lonesome after he left. In fact, it wasn't any fun on the island at all, so we went on up the canal to the lock, where we had dinner with Peg's relatives. They asked us to stay to supper, too, so it was almost nine o'clock when we got home.

On the way through town we were stopped by the marshal.

"What's this truck I hear 'bout you kids doin' the 'presto-change' act with old what-you-may-call-it's *Hellamajigger?*" grinned Bill Hadley.

Hellamajigger! He meant *Heloderma,* of course. But we didn't catch on to the rest of his talk.

"Did you see it?" laughed Scoop.

"*See* it?" came the further grin from our big rough friend. "Didn't I jest tell you that it once was, but now hain't."

"Meaning which?"

"They was a big rumpus up on Oak Street," Bill then told us, "when old thing-a-ma-bob unpacked his suitcase an' found the *Hellamajigger* missin'."

"What?" cried Scoop, staring. Then he looked at me.

"Absolutely, an' nothin' else but. He was in bed from the shock when I got there. Couldn't hardly talk at first. But Mrs. Tiff was quite as purficient as usual with her gab. An' if I had listened to *her* advice, you kids would be in the cooler now."

The surprise on Scoop's face gave place to a scowl.

"I suppose she thinks we stole it, huh?"

"Learnin' that you were on the island with her uncle—an' the old man still sticks to the story that he never opened the box between the island an' town—it's her belief that you kids hid the lizard on him in trickery."

Scoop let out a squeak.

"*Us* hide *that thing? Good* night! If you once saw it, Bill, you'd know better than that."

"Hain't very purty, heh?"

"*Pretty?* Do you call a rattlesnake pretty?"

Bill waggled.

"It does beat me," said he, "how any he-man kin spend his whole lifetime gallivantin' 'round after sech useless an' ondesirable critters as *lizards*. Still, the old geezer hain't all there. Nope. I saw that right off. . . . An' you kids

haven't any idear where the lizard went to?"

We shook our heads.

"Honest, cross our hearts," we told him earnestly.

"Um . . . Do you su'pose," then came the thought, "that the old geezer is tryin' to pull a trick on us?"

"What kind of a trick?"

"Mebbe he let the lizard get away from him on purpose."

"But why should he do that?" said Scoop, puzzled.

"Stranger things has happened, as, fur instance, the time my mother-in-law raised pumpkins on a cucumber vine."

"The lizard is worth ten thousand dollars," said Scoop thoughtfully. "And having taken him eleven years to capture it, the last thing he would want to do would be to turn it loose."

"Waal," shrugged Bill, "let's hope he finds it. An', to that p'int, if it hain't lassoed purty quick, by him or some one else, they's goin' to be blamed few picnic parties pulled off 'round here. Fur who wants to lay in the grass an' run the chance of bein' kissed by that thing?"

We didn't see the scientist for three days. Then Bill took us up to Mrs. Tiff's house to con-

vince the old man, who was up and around, though wabbly in the knees, that we hadn't snitched the big lizard on him in fun. Later Mr. Ellery and the bee woman had a ruckatuck over their line fence. You see, Scoop's pa didn't like the way the woman was still talking about us in the neighborhood in connection with her uncle's lost lizard. And he as much as told her that if she didn't put a clothespin on her gab, and quit accusing his son of tricks of which he was innocent, he'd have the law do the clothespin act for her. Getting on her high-horse then, the borrowed curtain stretchers was brought home in a jiffy, after which she quit speaking to Mrs. Ellery.

Scoop and I didn't mix up in the neighborhood row. As a matter of fact, we felt pretty sorry for the old scientist. The loss of his big lizard had sort of crushed him. He showed it in his stooped shoulders and shambling gait. And though the new writing desk made a second trip into Oak Street, we were told the lizard specialist had lost all interest in his intended book.

If only we could help him! We thought about it a lot. But outside of thinking and wishing, what could we do? To start blindly and hunt for the lizard over the thirty or forty square

miles of territory between the island and town would be a million times crazier than trying to find a needle in a haystack. And if the lizard had been mysteriously stolen, as wasn't impossible, it could very well be thousands of miles away by this time.

Little did we dream of the tangling circumstances under which the lizard would again show up, or of the crazy dose of shipwrecks, tub rafts, cannibals, sleeping toes and whispering caves that was going to be dished out to us.

We had *some* adventure, let me tell you!

CHAPTER II

AT THE BANQUET

PROBABLY, if the truth were known, Mrs. Tiff wasn't half as mad at us over the loss of her uncle's wonderful *Heloderma* as she let on to the neighbors before she and Mr. Ellery had their lively little tongue party over the back-yard fence. She just used the empty lizard box as a chance to blat. And every blat, of course, was a neat pat on the scientific back for Uncle Hebberloom . . . and, incidentally, an equally neat pat on the back for herself.

As a matter of fact, if the big lizard hadn't escaped before it got to town, she might have found herself taking a very leisurely and flowery ride up the hill to the cemetery. For it turned out that she never was sure where her absent-minded visitor's "pets" were. Sometimes they were in their boxes . . . but very often they weren't! And how lovely for her to jump into bed some night and find the hungry-eyed, sloppy-jawed *Heloderma* there ahead of her!

But loyal to the family celebrity, you can bet your shoes that *she* never started the report that it was dead lizards that the plumbers fished out of her clogged cellar drain. I guess not! Yet, the further story got out that every time a door slammed in the house green lizards streaked it in all directions. As a result, the neighbor women quit going there. And as it wasn't any satisfaction to her to have the famous scientist (and his lizards!) completely to herself, she got up a swell reception, with three kinds of ice cream for desert. A bad headache kept Mother home that night—only Dad made it lumbago when he got to the party, for, as he explained afterwards, he felt silly in giving the "headache" excuse when all the other men's absent wives had "headaches."

Fizzling out on the reception, Mrs. Tiff then got the clever little idea in her head of unloading her famous relative onto the Tutter Boy Scouts for an evening. But that was all right with us. For kids aren't scared of lizards like women. And the old gentleman knew a lot of peachy stories.

So, at a special scout meeting, we all voted in favor of a banquet "to honor the illustrious scientist in our midst," as Mayor Whaley's letter read—only it was Mrs. Tiff who had written

the letter, and not the town's chief executive, himself. I took baked beans and Scoop took potato salad. As usual, a number of the business men helped out as table waiters. And Negro Mose was on hand in the kitchen to do the dish-washing.

Say, that was some swell feed, let me tell you —forty-eight of us lined up and down the sides of one long table. The honor guest, of course, was given the best place at the head of the table, and everything was passed to him first. Scoop and I got seats close to him, for one time, at another supper like this, we sat further down the table, and a lot of the choice stuff ran out before it got to us. As the old saying is, a fellow lives and learns.

Well, when the grub was all put away inside of us, the scoutmaster got up, as usual, and spoke his little piece about how honored we were in having the opportunity to feed baked beans and potato salad to the world's foremost authority on lizards, and probably if we would sit very still—and Tenderfoot Jenks would separate his fingers from Poppy Ott's hair—Professor Hebberloom Clatterby, *A.B., LL.D., P.D.Q.*, etc., would entertain us with a few stories taken out of his own scientific experiences.

Getting up then, sort of teetery-kneed, the Professor beamed at us as though we looked as curious to him as some of his rare lizards did to us. It was a great pleasure for him to be here, he said. Then he went on to tell about some of his unusual lizard hunts, as he had told us the same stories up the canal. But he hadn't talked many minutes before Scoop dug me in the ribs with his elbow.

"Jerry!" came the snickering whisper. "Look at his pocket."

Crickets! I thought I'd bust right out when I saw what Scoop saw. The absent-minded Professor had lugged one of his lizards to the banquet in his coat pocket. And every second or two, up would come the prisoner's green snout.

Well, you know how boys are. When they are all giggly inside it's got to come out. And about the time that lizard did the third peek-a-boo act we were ready to yip our heads off. And not only Scoop and I, but all the other kids on our side of the table.

There! Every kid who was watching the pocket would sort of suck in his breath as the green snout came up. Then there would be a sort of deep, stomachy sigh as the snout went back. We kind of raised up in our seats, too, and settled

back. I saw the scoutmaster looking at us curiously. But he wasn't on the lizard side of the teetering speaker, so he didn't get wise.

The Professor got in a joke or two—the silliest kind of jokes if you want to know the truth of the matter—but we laughed so hard we made him dizzy. "My word!" he beamed at us. "My word! What exuberant mirth." He didn't know, of course, that we were laughing at the lizard. About the time we got to the point where we could stop laughing, up would come the green snout again, and then we would break out worse than ever.

Finally the scoutmaster got up and came around to where we were, for *he* knew, of course, that there was some secret stuff going on. And then the funniest thing of all happened. Coming in with a pitcher of water for the speaker, old Mose leaned over to set the pitcher down just as the determined lizard made a final do-or-die leap to get out of its prison. It struck the old negro on the hand, and, say, he let out a screech that raised the roof two feet. In throwing up his hands, the pitcher went, too, and the scoutmaster, standing just behind him, got the neatest and most complete shower bath of his lifetime. *Laugh?* Say, you could have heard us a mile.

And, to that point, no one got any more fun out of the ducking than Mr. Brown, himself, which shows what kind of a scoutmaster *he* is. The scientist, though, stood there the picture of bewilderment. "My word!" he said, looking up and down the double row of twisting, yipping kids. "My word! How extraordinary. How *very* extraordinary."

As I say, a number of Tutter business men were there. And to help the fun along they grabbed a towel and came running to Mr. Brown to do the blotting act. Then another man beckoned to me from a doorway.

"The telephone, Jerry."

"Hello," I said, when I got to the telephone.

"Is that you, Son?" came in Mother's voice.

"Sure thing."

"We just had a long-distance call for you. So you better get the operator right away."

"What's wrong?" I asked quickly.

"Nothing that I know of. It's Peg Shaw, I think."

Peg Shaw! Almost twenty miles away, what in Sam Hill was *he* calling me up for at this time of night? For a moment or two I was scared. And so as not to miss a single word of what my big chum had to say to me, I stuffed a finger into my

open ear to shut out the noise in the next room.

Pretty soon we were talking back and forth over the wire.

"What's all the racket?" inquired Peg, as the kids in the next room gave the visitor a rousing scout cheer.

I told him about our big supper.

"Gee!" said he, sort of hungry-like.

"Baked beans and potato salad and seven kinds of sandwiches and ice cream and pie and pickles and—"

"Gee!" he said again.

"Who's paying for this call?" I then inquired cautiously.

"Me," he laughed.

"You must be rich."

"Oh, I gave the telephone girl one of my pictures, and I get a third off after eight o'clock."

"You should have passed off one of my pictures," I joked, "and you would own the line now."

"Say, Jerry," he got down to business, "can you and Scoop come up here to-morrow or next day?"

"What for?"

"I've found a bee tree."

"With honey in it?"

"Tons of it," came recklessly.

"And what do you want us to do?—kill the bees for you?"

"We won't kill them. For there's millions of them, kid. And they're worth money to us if we can get them into hives."

"Where is this wonderful bee tree?"

"On Oak Island. I rowed back there this afternoon, just for the fun of it. And what do you know if I didn't bump into the big bee tree almost as soon as I landed. We can have a barrel of fun cutting the tree down. And Uncle Jupe says we ought to get a barrel of honey—forty-fifty dollars' worth. Mrs. Tiff will tell you how to get the bees out of the tree and into the hives. Maybe she'll buy the bees, too. You ask her."

"Yah—like so much mud."

"What's the matter?"

"She's sore at us."

"Crickets!" said he, when I had told him the whole story. "Doesn't the old man have any idea where the lizard went to?"

"No more than we have, I guess."

"Well, what do you know about that!" the other whistled.

"Forget about the lizard," I said, "and tell me more about this wonderful bee tree of yours."

He laughed.

"You ought to see my nose, Jerry."

"Some one soak you?"

"Yah—a busy little bee. It's all puffed up like a baby blimp."

"The bee or your nose?"

"My nose, of course. And in monkeying around the tree, another lively little honey hustler tickled me over the eyes."

"Rough stuff, huh?"

"I'll tell the world. I can hardly see with my right eye. And there's a queer dizzy feeling in my head, too. The swelling, I guess. . . . Well, do I meet you on the island to-morrow? Or shall we make it Wednesday?"

"I can't promise anything without talking with Scoop."

"Call him."

"I could yell my head off and he wouldn't hear me."

"Be sure and tell him not to bring his canoe."

"Why not?"

"You poor fish! How would we get our honey home in the canoe?"

"I get you. We need a fleet of rowboats, huh?"

"One big one will be enough."

"Is it your idea to camp on the island while we're there?"

"Yes, or we can stay at Uncle Jupe's."

"I'd rather camp. It'll be more fun."

"Don't forget about Red Meyers, Jerry. We want him, too."

I laughed.

"The same old four-cornered gang, huh?"

"That's the ticket. And whatever we get for the bees and the honey, we split four ways. See?"

"Red isn't here to-night. But I'll see him the first thing in the morning."

"Ask him if my slingshot is at his house. And if it is, bring it along—I want it to shoot turtles."

"How'd it be," I then suggested, "if we called you up on the telephone to-morrow morning?"

"Fine. Or if you can't come till Wednesday, save your telephone money and drop me a post card at Steam Corners. For I go there every morning to get the mail. A two-mile row each way. Real fun, kid."

"Is your uncle going to help us get the honey?"

"No. He can't leave the lock. Besides, he's tinkering a farmer's auto just now. I told him about the old auto engine that we hitched up to your pa's scow. I thought of the old scow when

I was on the island. Boy, we sure had fun. If only we could do it all over again, huh?"

"You tell 'em!"

"Say, Jerry, did you know that a St. Louis millionaire is going to build a swell summer home on the island?"

"And what does that mean for us?—no more free camping?"

"I suppose so. Gee, it makes me hot the way some of those smart rich guys buy up places like that and shut kids out. As I understand it, the big wide waters is going to be turned into a private fishing pond—no one allowed to fish there except Mr. Millionaire and his high-toned gang. I suppose he'll build a high-board fence around his precious island so that we won't be able to look at his trees and poison them. He's coming some time this week to look things over. So shake a leg, old hunk, and get your gang together. For we've got to get the honey out of the bee tree before the island is his."

There was some more talk, mostly about the lizard, and then the telephone operator cut us off, Peg having told her in advance that four bits' worth was his limit. Turning, what was my surprise to find Professor Clatterby standing directly behind me. He had been listening. And

if he had hated me from the ground up he couldn't have given me a blacker look. So much alike were his eyes and those of the vanished lizard, that for a moment or two I was startled.

What was it Bill Hadley had said? Oh, yes —maybe the old man was trying to pull some kind of a trick on us—maybe he had let the lizard get away from him on purpose.

I was suddenly and mysteriously struck with the idea that the scientist, in learning our plans, *didn't want us to go back to the island.* That is why he had looked daggers at me. He had a secret. And he was afraid that if we went back to the island we would find out what that secret was.

CHAPTER III

HEADING INTO UNKOWN ADVENTURES

UNABLE to find me in the room where the other souts were, Scoop had gone on home alone. So I had no chance to tell him then about my telephone call and the mysterious-acting listener.

But over night my opinion of the queer Professor hadn't changed. I was dead sure that he wanted us to keep away from the lonely canal island. And that being the case, the answer was, of course, as I told my chum the following morning, that something was there—undoubtedly something of his—that he didn't want us to get next to. And what more likely than the "vanished" *Heloderma,* itself?

In a case of this kind the leader and I always do a lot of theorizing, which is perfectly all right. For the detective who passes up the theorizing trick never gets very far. And it was our theory now that the queer scientist had purposely left his big lizard on the island. His distress over the empty box had all been put on. But what was his

scheme? If he had indeed spent eleven years searching for the rare lizard, and it was worth as much as the newspapers said, why had he dropped it all of a sudden? Was he "cuckoo"? Or was there something *deep* behind the puzzling act?

Boy! With the double fun ahead of us of getting the honey out of the bee tree and putting on a lizard hunt, probably as exciting as any that the scientist had told us about, we were crazy to get back to the island. But we didn't talk about the lizard as much as we did about the honey, for we had the feeling, for one thing, that a pair of hidden eyes might be closer to us than we suspected. And we didn't want the old scientist to know that we had the goods on him. Our hand would sort of be exposed then.

A barrel of wild honey! We sure were tickled pink in the thought that the honey was going to be ours. Having worked in his father's general store, Scoop said that the comb honey would strain about twenty gallons. At three dollars a gallon, which was the lowest store price, that would bring us sixty dollars. We were the lucky little things, all right. And what gave us further excitment, aside from the mystery, was the thought that maybe we could locate a second bee tree, in which case, as you can see, our profits

would jump to a hundred dollars or over. We swaggered around. A hundred dollars in our pockets, and all the fun of getting the honey out of the tree! Wonderful world!

We scooted in quick search of Red Meyers to tell him the grand and glorious news. He's another member of our gang. Outside of the fact that he's got a million freckles and the reddest hair you ever set eyes on, he's a good kid. If you haven't read about him in some of my other stories, I bet you'll like him in this story. We found him doctoring a sick hen. But he dropped the hen and the castor-oil bottle in a jiffy when we told him our double scheme. And with him in tow, we ran to Dad's brickyard canal dock to see if there was any chance of fixing up the old clay scow that Peg had mentioned over the telephone. For, as we had told Red, we had decided that it would be more fun going to the island in the scow. The canoe, of course, was out of the question; and rowboat stuff was tame. Then too, if we were likely to get several hundred pounds of wild honey, or possibly a ton or two, we would need power to get it home.

In my "Oak Island Treasure" book I told in detail how we fitted up Dad's old flat-bottomed, square-ended clay scow, the *Sally Ann,* with

audience seats and a stage. We called ourselves the *Sally Ann* Show Company. And did we ever have fun giving our amateur black art show! We made a lot of money, too. So that we could navigate up and down the canal in style, giving real shows in the various nearby small canal towns, we rigged up a power plant, consisting of an old auto engine that we bought as junk for three dollars, and a wooden propeller of our own manufacture. The worn-out engine heaved and groaned in its work, smoking to beat the cars, but it did the business. Anyway, kids like to monkey with home-made truck like that. A swell power boat wouldn't have given us half the fun.

Red is handy with machinery. And pretty soon, as the engineer, he had the old engine pounding away as sweetly as ever. Just like a husky young boiler factory. Untying the scow, we ran it in practice up and down the canal, Scoop doing the tiller stuff. Boy, it was just like old times—only, of course, we hadn't any stage and audience seats now.

Dropping Peg a card to the point that we would meet him at the island on Wednesday, we got together all the pails and dippers that we could lay our hands on. We would need these, we figured, in getting the honey out of the tree.

Scoop's pa had some empty molasses barrels in his store basement that he said we could have. To get at the inside of these, to clean them, we sawed them in half, which gave us eight swell big honey tubs. While we were getting our other stuff ready for the exciting trip, we soaked the barrel tubs in the canal, so that they wouldn't leak when it came time to use them.

Maybe you have met the Stricker gang in some of my other books. Well, Bid and his same old mean-eyed outfit meandered to the dock while we were at work there and limbered up their curious necks. They have it in for us because we're smarter than they are. You never saw such jealous kids in all your life. The easiest thing that they can do is to smash up our truck. We didn't tell them anything about our bee tree, for we didn't want them to cut in on us. But Bid is foxy. Hiding in one of our clever little honey tubs, the enemy leader overheard us talking about the hundred dollars that we were going to pick up from the sale of our wild honey. And when we saw the gang piling tents and other truck into a couple of rowboats, we knew what to expect. They had pails, too, the same as we had; and we learned later on, that like us, they had a bee smoker. So, as you can see, they were as well

prepared to get the honey as we were.

Outside of certain secret reasons for not wanting them on the island, it made us hot to think that the sneaks would butt in on us this way. But we couldn't stop them. For they had as much right in the canal as us. Tuesday night, though, we fastened two big paving-brick anchors to the bottom of each of their loaded rowboats. With these weights dragging in the muddy bed of the canal, they certainly wouldn't be able to make much speed. So it didn't worry us the next morning to learn that they were an hour ahead of us.

We overtook them a mile or two outside of town. Boy, were they ever sweating at the oars! They pulled so hard that their eyes stuck out like halved onions. I thought I'd die laughing as I pictured in my mind the dragging bricks. Each boat left a long muddy trail in the water. The canal turtles had their necks stretched, wondering, I guess, what was going on. Maybe they figured that some new kind of a dredging machine was being tested out.

We passed them under power, our engine heaving and the propeller chattering in its worn wooden bearings. We felt pretty chesty in our victory over the sneaks. Unless they discovered the dragging bricks, it would take them two days

to get to the island. In the meantime we would get there ahead of them and unload the bee tree. Then, if necessary, we would lay low until they had gone. Certainly, we weren't going to leave the island without solving the mystery of the vanished lizard. Not that there was any reward in it for us. But we were curious to know the truth.

As mentioned in my first chapter, the island that we were heading for was situated in the big lonely wide waters between Ashton and Steam Corners. To make every point of my story clear, I probably should explain that a canal "wide waters" is a place where boats meet and pass. Like a railroad siding. We have a small wide waters below Tutter, and there is another between our town and Ashton, the county seat, ten miles east of us. The big wide waters that I'm writing about in my story is a sort of lake, about a mile and a half from east to west and a mile wide, with the wooded island to the north of the channel, which, running east and west, is marked off with parallel rows of piles painted white.

Dad says that before the canal was built the Oak Island wide water was a swamp, and the island that I'm going to tell you about was a rocky knoll. Of its many trees the largest is an oak, growing on the highest point, and it is this out-

standing oak that gained for the island its name.

Just before we came to Ashton a nifty power boat cantered up behind us. It wasn't a big boat, but it sure had a snappy engine. We thought for a moment or two that it was going to hit us. Then the strange boy at the wheel, who was trying to show off, did something to the machinery of the boat that quickly stopped it.

As nearly as we could judge he was about our age—only his better clothes made him look more grown up than us. We all had on long pants, but his looked more like a man's pants. And he was further lit up in a silk sport shirt set off with a bright red tie. You've seen pictures of admirals —well, his cap, which matched his white duck pants, had that kind of a turned-down peak. I suspected, after a good squint at him, that he also had on patent leather oxfords and purple silk socks. For he looked to me to be that kind of a kid.

My, oh, my! You should have seen the contempt in his aristocratic face as he took in our home-made boat. From the twist of his nose, you could have imagined that we were worms in a hunk of decayed cheese.

"Git over ag'inst the bank," he tried to hurry us along, acting as though he owned the whole canal, "so that I can go by."

Now, if he had been halfway civil about it, we would, of course, have cheerfully given him all the room he needed. Such had been our intentions. But it made us hot to be ordered around like servants. Just because he had a swell motor boat he wasn't any better than us. I guess not! And how ugly he had shoved that "git" stuff at us! We were justified in taking our time.

I began to wonder who the young smart aleck was. Then I tumbled to the truth of the matter when I got my eyes on a "St. Louis" penant flying at the prow of the thousand-dollar boat.

"Well," he scowled over the delay.

Scoop cupped his right ear, as though he was hard of hearing.

"Did you say something?" he purred.

"I said to git over ag'inst the bank, so that I can go by."

"What?"

"What?" was the disgusted echo, showing how put out the dude was. "Do I have to yell that all over again?"

"'Gin?'" said Scoop. "No," he shook his head, "we haven't got any gin."

"I didn't say 'gin.' I said to *git over ag'inst the bank, so that I can go by.*"

Scooped beamed.

"Oh! . . You want to go by."

"Step on it, deafy, I'm in a hurry."

I got the leader's ear.

"He's from St. Louis," I whispered, pointing to the penant. "He must be the millionaire Peg told about."

Scoop's nose went up.

"*Him?* He's just a kid."

Red had edged the scow against the right-hand bank, which gave the other kid plenty of passing space. But he wasn't satisfied with that. To hear him growl at us, you could have imagined that we hadn't any right in the canal at all.

There are a few kids of that stamp in the world. I'm glad to say, though, that you don't run across them very often.

Passing us, the smart aleck shoved his throttle wide open, giving us a bath from the racing propeller. That tickled us, of course. Oh, yes! He'd pay for the mean trick, we told one another, gritting our teeth.

Afterwards we learned that he had come up the Illinois River, getting into the canal at the main

lock, five miles below Tutter. And his purpose in coming here, of course, was to see the island that his rich father was interested in.

In Ashton we saw the speed boat tied to the town dock. Smarty wasn't in sight, so we figured that he was up town treating himself to a banana split. No cheap treats for a classy guy like him! It tickled us to get this chance to skin by him. And, as Scoop said, just let him try to pass us now!

Having stopped our clever little ark beside the speed boat, interested in it in spite of our ugly feelings toward its owner, we got our eyes on the brass propeller, which was only a few inches under water.

"I'd like to loosen it for him," growled Scoop.

"Let's," I urged eagerly. The kid had showered us with water, so we had a right to fix him.

Red was rubbering, too.

"All you've got to do," came his mechanical advice, "is to unscrew that bolt."

"Hot dog!" yipped Scoop. "Shove me a wrench."

Getting into his bathing suit, the leader slid over the edge of the scow, finding that he could touch bottom, which made it easy working. Quickly loosening the bolt that locked the pro-

peller to its shaft, he was back in our boat when smarty strutted into sight on the dock. A group of Ashton kids were watching the free parade. And smarty liked it, too! Getting into his fancy boat, as lordly as you please, he raced the powerful engine, to show off, then twitched a lever. But, to his amazement, nothing happened!

This was "pie" for the kids on the dock.

"Git a horse," the leader hooted. Then the whole gang went, "Hee-haw! Hee-haw!"

Smarty's face was as red as the flannel petticoat that came home in our wash by mistake the time Mother had the mumps. Trying again, he got no better results. Then he headed up town.

"He's gone to git the horse docter," hooted one of the kids.

"Yah, his old nag's got mud rheumatism."

"Aw, shut up," smarty fired back at them, as he hurried out of sight.

Scoop laughed.

"I've got a good one, fellows."

"Spill it."

"Let's tighten his propeller again. Then, when the mechanic tells him that everything is all right, he'll feel like two cents."

That was a good way, all right, to end our trick. So the leader got busy. And climbing

into our boat again, the job completed, he slapped the engineer on the back.

"Now, kid," he laughed, "show some speed."

"What?" I cried. "Aren't we going to stay here and see the fun?"

"Can't do it, Jerry," he shook his head. "For we want the honey, first of all. And to get it, we've got to beat the other kid to the island. So the faster we travel, and the quicker we work when we get there, the better for us."

CHAPTER IV

SHIPWRECKED

HAVING gotten an early-morning start, we were within two miles of the big wide waters when noon came. That may sound to you like awfully slow traveling. But you must remember what a big clumsy boat we had. It weighed many tons. And the power plant wasn't much, though, having rigged it up ourselves, we were mighty proud of it.

For the past hour Red had been yipping his head off for dinner. So at twelve o'clock we stopped to eat. There was a stuffy, gaggy feeling in the late summer air. A storm was coming up. But this didn't give us any particular worry. For soon now we would be on the island, where our tent would give us all the shelter we needed. Or, in a pinch, we could beat it for the hermit's cave until the storm was over.

Then, when we least wanted it to happen, the engine went dead on us. We cranked and cranked. But to no success. And rather than

have the storm strike us here, we decided to pole the scow into the wide waters, just ahead of us. Once we were in open water the wind would take us where we wanted to go. There was that much in our favor.

Well, I want to tell you that we had *some* storm. The sky got as black as night. And the *lightning!* Oh, boy! It jiggled around in the rolling black clouds like rivers of white fire. The thunder slam-banged like a hundred powder blasts touched off together. We could feel the canal shake. I shook, too. Then the rain got its eyes on us and came down in buckets. Maybe it thought we needed a bath. Well, we sure got it. Our scow was driven by the wind into the wide waters. And unable to guide the clumsy craft, we began to wonder, as we scooted along with increasing speed, if the island would crack when we hit it.

Crash! As the shivering scow came to a sudden stop, I realized that we had struck something, all right. Good and plenty. But it wasn't the island. For I could still see water all around us. And if we had hit the island we would have been on dry land. The crazy thought jumped into my mind that maybe we had hit a monstrous alligator.

Scoop made a dash for one of the end decks, for the water was rushing into the pit.

"She's sinking, fellows!" he yipped. "We've got to swim for it."

Well, I don't mind telling you that I was scared. I'm a pretty good swimmer, having been doing it quite regularly since I was five years old. But it was going to be a hard tussle for us to keep on top of the big waves. Say, those waves were ten feet high. Well, maybe not a full ten feet, but almost ten feet. I could imagine what they would be liable to do to me, all right.

But lucky for us the accident had happened in comparatively shallow water. So the scow didn't go down more than two or three feet before it struck bottom. We were safe enough now, in a way. That is, we wouldn't have to swim to shore in the storm. But we had lost our boat. That was plain enough. The way it had gone down after hitting the sunken channel pile proved that the whole bottom was ripped open.

Well, the storm performed for another thirty minutes or so, and then cantered on, as summer storms usually do. Instead of the earlier gale that had done so much damage to us, a sweet-smelling breeze came out of the south. You know how good everything smells after a summer rain, espe-

cially when the sun comes out hot. It was that way now. The washed birds had a livelier, happier song, and even the mud turtles seemed to wink at us good-naturedly as they came to the top of the water. Had our scow been affoat, we would have drifted nicely to the island's sandy south shore. But, as I say, we had grounded. In mud, too. And the harder we worked with our poles to loosen the heavy boat, the tighter it hugged its gooey bed. So we finally threw our poles down. It was no use. Our work was just a waste of strength.

In looking around for raft stuff, convinced now that we would have to abandon the old scow, much as we hated to do so, Scoop got a bright idea. Why not build a "tub" raft, he said, like in the book, *Swiss Family Robinson?* Red and I said "Hot dog!" to that. It would be bully fun. So we got our eight tubs lined up, fastening them together with boards nailed to the sides. This didn't take long. And pushing the raft into the water, we loaded the tubs, all but three, with our tent and other stuff. The rain had been rough on our grub, so to save a soggy chocolate cake we ate it, Scoop and Red working hard on one sticky half and me on the other. Then we piled into our tubs, Red in front, me in the middle and Scoop

behind. With a blanket for a sail, and a board for a rudder, we set forth.

Say, that was the most fun I ever had. It was just like a real shipwreck. And as we got closer to the lonely canal island, with its low swampy stretches so lively with strange snakes and turtles, its sandstone bluffs where the ravines were, and its densely wooded slopes, I could imagine that the rest of the world was thousands of miles away. This uninhabited, uncharted island that we were about to land on was ours by right of discovery. Here we would make our home, ride tamed buffaloes, build tree houses and discover caves, just like Fritz Robinson and his brothers. We would have a battle with hungry cannibals, too. And that, of course, would be the most exciting part of all.

Shaded and grassy, the island's gently sloping south shore was by far the most convenient and agreeable place to land, but Scoop, in using his head, said it would be safer for us to anchor out of sight at the extreme rocky east end.

"What's the matter?" laughed Red. "Are you scared of the St. Louis kid?"

"He might lick us," Scoop cowered in fun.

"Yes," I said, still sore at the kid, "and he might not."

The leader then told us what he had in mind in hiding the raft.

"It's the Stricklers that I'm thinking about. They may get here sooner than we suspect. So the thing for us to do is to be prepared."

Red, though, being thirsty, wanted to get out here and cross the island to the north shore where the spring was. So we went on without him, telling him where to meet us.

Our sail was of little benefit to us now, so I took it down. And helping Scoop paddle, we soon came to the landing place that the leader had suggested, where we found a dandy hidden bay—the finest thing in the world for our purpose. Running a rope from the raft to a tree, we started inland, where we met Red coming on the run, his eyes as big as saucers.

"What's the matter?" grinned Scoop. "Did you stumble over old General Debility?"

"There's a man here," the runner panted.

"Aw, shucks!" cried Scoop in disappointment.

"I don't mean a *camper,*" the scared one ran on quickly, reading the leader's thoughts. "I mean a spy."

That got a laugh.

"All right. You just follow me and see for yourself."

Coming to the place where the thirsty one had waded ashore, he quickly led us to a tree, at the base of which we were shown several naked footprints in the soft wet sand. Nor were they a boy's footprints, either.

It was a sort of coincidence, as you call it, that we had landed on the island like the Swiss pastor and his family, and now, like Robinson Crusoe, were reading possible danger to ourselves in naked footprints that we could not doubt had been made here *after* the rain. Headed for the island in our queer craft, some man, mysteriously barefooted, had watched us from behind this tree. Nor was it a silly notion that he still was secretly watching us. Certainly, the many trees and bushes growing here gave him all the cover he needed. But why was he going barefooted? That was unusual for a *man* in these parts. And why was he hiding? Was he afraid of us? Or was it necessary to certain schemes of his—schemes, no doubt, in which the queer scientist had a hidden part—to keep out of our sight?

"Gosh!" shimmied Red. "I'd just as soon go home."

"What?" the leader fired at him. "Go home without the honey? You're goofy."

"The geezer with the big feet may stick a butcher knife into us."

"But why should he do that? We haven't done anything to him."

"He doesn't want us here."

"How do you know?"

Red blew up under the steady questioning.

"*Good* night! He ran and hid, didn't he? Isn't that proof?"

Scoop grinned.

"Maybe he's bashful, like you."

"Bashful, your granny! He's waiting to get a crack at us."

"Anyway," was the leader's further nonsense, "it's to our luck that he ran *away* from us instead of *at* us."

"Every time I go out with you guys," suffered Red, "I get into trouble."

"Yes," said Scoop quickly, "and we always get you out of it, too."

"I wish I was home."

"You poor fish! You don't know when you're lucky."

"*Lucky!*" squeaked the smaller one. "Look at those big feet!"

"You can't always tell how big a man is," grinned Scoop, "by the size of his feet. Besides,

what if the feet are big? That isn't any sign that you're going to get stepped on."

"I have the feeling," Red suffered further, "that something a whole lot worse than getting stepped on is going to happen to me."

"Yes," waggled the leader, dropping his nonsense, "and *I* have the happy feeling that we're a whole lot closer to a solution of the lizard mystery than we realize. It was a puzzle to me *why* the old scientist dropped the valuable lizard here. That was a crazy act, I thought. But now we know that he's got a man here keeping the lizard company. So the thing for us to do, instead of getting cold feet and lighting out for home, is to find out *who* the hidden geezer is and then squeeze the secret out of him."

It gives one a blamed uncomfortable feeling, let me tell you, to know that he's a target for hidden eyes. For people who *hide* on a fellow usually are against him. But though I could imagine all kinds of possible dangers as I dug into the nearby bushes with my own uneasy eyes, still I didn't want to follow Red's suggestion and go home—though, to that point, while his calfy talk sounded sincere enough, I had the hunch that his scare was largely put on. For that's a trick of his. Lots of times he blats around, as though

he was "yellow" all the way through, yet, when it comes right down to business, he shows as much solid grit as the next kid.

No, as I say, I didn't want to go home. Now that we were here, I wanted to stay and get the honey. And my curiosity over the bare-footed spy, or whatever he should rightfully be called, was getting bigger every minute. We'd soon have Peg with us. That would be four against one. So we certainly ought to be able to hold our own. And while the hidden one was doing the spying act on us, what was to hinder us from doing the same thing on him? Certainly, I was crazy to try it.

CHAPTER V

THE HIDDEN CAVE

To our disappointment we had seen nothing of Peg. And it rather puzzled us to understand why he hadn't joined us before this. For we had told him in our post card that we would meet him here Wednesday noon. So by rights he should have been here ahead of us. Not knowing where the bee tree was, we were unable to do any work until he got here. Then, too, we were crazy to talk with him about the barefooted spy. For his ideas are good. Besides, he might have heard something at his uncle's house about the mysterious islander.

We climbed the rocks to the island's summit, as from here we could see quite a long distance up the canal. But no rowboats were in sight.

Was it possible, then came the sober thought, that something had happened to our big chum? Landing alone on the island, before we got there, had he been tackled without warning by the barefooted spy and thus made a prisoner?

We decided to search the island right away.

For Peg's possible prison would naturally be the spy's camp. And so, to rescue our chum, the thing for us to do first of all would be to find out where that camp was. Nor would the work take us very long, we figured. For we knew the small island like a book.

We kept together. That was the safest plan, Scoop said. And it was my job to watch *behind* while the other two took the lead. Making a circuit of the extreme western end of the island, where the swamp and general lowlands were, we worked toward the rocky eastern section. There were ravines here. A ravine, as you probably know, is a sort of big gully, caused by the wash from rain and snow. The rocky ledges that we climbed up and around were mostly white sandstone. Having been here for ages, the weather had cracked and gouged them, and at places in the ravines there were small natural caves, probably the work of the great river that once had raged down the valley, if we are to believe what our geographies tell us. Years ago a hermit living here like Robinson Crusoe had enlarged one of these natural caves into a roomy chamber. And having found no traces so far of a tent or hut, we were quite sure now that the spy was living in this big cave.

But where was the cave? Crawling to the rim of the ravine, and guardedly looking down, we were unable to find the familiar door-like opening. We went on to the next nearby ravine, very much like this one, thinking that we stupidly had made a mistake in our location. No. We had been at the right place, all right. Yet what new mystery was this that the known cave had completely vanished?

Imagine our excitement to discover, in closer work, that the mouth of the cave had been cleverly hid by dense trailing vines. The spy's work, of course. He was indeed secretly living here. And if he had taken our big chum prisoner, as we suspected, Peg, of course, was now somewhere inside of the cave. Probably tied hand and foot. But was the big lizard there, too? We hated to give any thought to such a possibility. For if you want to know the truth, we were more scared of the wicked-looking lizard than we were of its big-footed keeper. And to have our chum in such peril was sort of sickening to us. Still, was our hopeful conclusion, if the lizard was there it probably was shut up in a box or pen.

In the hour that we secretly watched the cave we saw no signs of life there. And getting braver, through necessity, we finally tiptoed down

the sandstone ledge, off which the cave had its entrance.

"Peg!" we whispered through the vine screen, confident that if our chum heard us he would make some kind of a sound in reply, if nothing more than the scraping of his shoe on the rocky floor. But we heard nothing. "Peg!" we said, louder. Still no sound in reply. Scoop lifted the vine screen then. Nothing jumped at us. So, after a moment or two, we got up the courage to go inside, finding that not only was the cave empty of its owner, but also of anything in the way of a prisoner or lizard.

As I say, the story is told that a hermit had lived here long ago. And I guess the story is true, all right, for I can remember a few years back when there was an old rotten table in the cave and two or three broken chairs. Now the rock-walled chamber was fixed up like a room in a house, with a bed, table and chairs, an old oil stove, cupboard and other housekeeping truck. Taking a guarded squint into the cupboard, we found a number of pans and sticky-looking dishes. There was stuff to eat, too, such as bread, potatoes and dry cookies. Every part of the cave showed recent usage, so we knew, all right, that this was the spy's chief hiding place.

And satisfied now that something had delayed our chum at the lock, we were filled with contentment in the thought of how easily we could hide up above in the rocks and thus find out who the cave dweller was.

Rubbering here and there, Scoop called our attention to a box of books.

"Look, gang! *Bibles!* Dozens of 'em. And all alike. What do you know about it?"

"Maybe our 'spy' is a shipwrecked book agent," I laughed, little realizing how close I had hit on the truth.

"Here's his name," cried Red, whose mechanical eyes had detected an old typewriter, into which was threaded a business letterhead. Here it is, as I copied it:

THE NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE COMPANY
Philadelphia, Penna.
Rev. Joshua Jonathan Jacobs, District Distributor,
P.O. Box 33, Steam Corners, Ill.

Having read the letterhead, I quickly put several things together in my mind.

"A barefooted preacher," I laughed. "He must be a nut to live in a place like this."

"We partly know why he's living here," Scoop said mysteriously.

I looked around.

"Listen, kid. It wasn't until last week that the Professor came here. And *this* geezer with the Old Testament name has been living here for months. The cave shows it. So what are you going to say to that?"

Scoop is fair.

"You're right," he waggled, getting my point.

Our conclusion was that the Bible peddler went barefooted only when he was on the island. Away on business, he dressed up like other men. And as proof that we weren't being spied on now, as we had suspected, we found the cave empty of shoes. Moreover, the hook on the side of the cupboard that undoubtedly held the caveman's good clothes when he was at home was empty. Having watched us land, he then had struck out for town on his usual business. And we had imagined that there were hidden eyes in every bush!

These discoveries left us more in the dark than ever regarding the lizard's secret, or, more properly speaking, the old scientist's secret, of which the lizard was an important part. Yet, before we had much of a chance to twist the

tangle around in our minds, Red made a further discovery that convinced us that the key to the lizard-hunter's secret was indeed here in the cave, notwithstanding the fact that so far we had found no traces of the vanished lizard, itself.

At the extreme back of the cave, on the east wall, more recent work had been done to further enlarge the chamber. A doorway had been cut into the sandstone, and then this new opening had been solidly sealed with stones and mortar. The tall cupboard had then been placed in front of the new masonry to completely hide it. Red's eyes, though, don't miss much! And, to that point, his mother says he's "snoopy." But I guess it pays a fellow to be "snoopy" sometimes. Certainly, it was a big streak of luck for us that our red-headed chum "snooped" behind the cupboard.

What had been sealed up here recently in the rock? Like the Egyptian kings, had an underground tomb been made for the big lizard? Was it hibernating, or whatever you call it? Or, more strangely, was it dead?

Yes, as the saying is, we were red hot now. The only thing that stood between us and a complete exposure of the mystery was a stone wall, which we were determined to secretly tear down as soon as we had our big chum to help us.

CHAPTER VI

SMARTY ORDERS US OUT

We again climbed the island's rocky summit, but still no sign of Peg. Nor did we get an answering "Hello!" when we yipped his name at the top of our voices.

Finding that we were just wasting time, we went back to the tub raft, where we unloaded our stuff, carrying it with a great deal of hard work up the rocky hillside. We never would have picked out such a crazy place to camp if it hadn't been for the enemy. And as we lugged and tugged, with the sweat messing up our hot faces, you can imagine how many times we wished that the Stricker gang was at the bottom of the Indian Ocean.

Suddenly we heard the rich kid's speed boat. And dropping everything, we ran to our lookout, from where we saw the unwelcome newcomer turn to the left into the shallows where our scow had gone down in the storm. Showing that he had some good sense, after all, he properly

slowed his motor down to a crawl. Then, when he was within a few feet of the south shore, he shut off the power altogether. A neat landing, all right. But we had no praise in our minds for him. I guess not! After what he had done to us it wouldn't have broken our hearts if he had gotten hung up on a sunken stump.

It wasn't our intention to purposely keep out of his sight, so he soon discovered that the island was already sort of inhabited.

"You guys loosened my propeller," he blustered into our hilltop camp, ready to eat us up.

Scoop gave a tantalizing grin.

"Oh! . . . Did we?"

"Yes, you did," came the scowl. "A man who saw you told me so. You loosened it to fool me, and then tightened it again."

The leader's grin became more tantalizing.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

Smarty suddenly remembered something.

"I thought you were deaf?" he eyed the leader in dark suspicion.

"I am . . . when a young smart aleck tries to boss me around."

"Say, you better be careful how you call me names."

"Yes, prune juice."

"I'll 'prune juice' you!"

"Yes, ham and gravy."

That was enough for smarty.

"Who said you guys could camp here?" he let out at us from a new angle.

"Arthur."

"Arthur? Arthur who?"

"Our thermometer."

Talk about a *red* face! Oh, baby!

"*You* aren't funny."

"No?"

"This is private property. So pick up your junk and git out of here."

"On whose orders?"

"Mine."

"And who are you?—the governor of the state?"

"I'm Randall Cliffe, Jr., from St. Louis."

"That's nothing," Scoop swaggered. "We're Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from St. Nicholas."

"My father owns this island. And we don't want any campers here, either. So clean out before I throw you out."

My, but he was a rough guy! I began to shiver —almost!

"Well," he scowled. "What are you waiting for?"

"To have you throw us out," grinned Scoop.

The bossy one, though, had no desire to commit suicide.

"I can have you arrested for trespassing."

"Maybe."

"This is my father's island."

"No, it isn't—not yet."

"We've paid money down on it."

"That doesn't make the island yours. You've got to have a deed to it to own it. I know."

"We're going to get a deed."

"All right. Go get it. And when you bring it back and show it to us, we'll vacate."

Smarty got sassier than ever then. And finally Scoop decided to shut him up.

"Say; let me tell *you* something, Mr. Randall Bluff, Jr.——"

"My name isn't Bluff," came the snarl. "It's Cliffe—C-l-i-f-f-e."

"It ought to be Bluff, for that's what you are," said Scoop, "a great big bluff—b-l-u-f-f. Just because your pa has money you've got an idea that you can bulldoze other kids and run over them. You think that money gives you that right. You don't seem to realize that because you have more

money than most kids you ought to be grateful instead of overbearing. What's your idea, anyway? Do you want to be the boss of everything? Well, you can't boss us. Not for one minute. Here nor any other place. This island is *ours*. Get me? It may be yours to-morrow, if your pa gets here with his checkbook. But to-day it belongs to us. And as we don't like your actions, and don't want you hanging around here, you better skiddo before one of us takes a sudden frisky notion to mess you up. We'll give you ten minutes. And if your truck isn't off *our* island by that time, we'll confiscate it, meaning that we'll take it and keep it, just like countries do in war. No, you needn't start blustering. It's tough on you, I know, to have to take orders from kids in common khaki pants. But it's what you've got coming to you for splashing us in the canal. So swallow your medicine, cutie—it's good for what ails you."

Say, a madder kid you never saw in all your life. And watching him swell up, I wondered if he wasn't liable to burst, like the frog in the fable.

"You guys win out now," he screeched at us from his motor boat. "But just wait till my father gits here. He'll fix you."

"Bring him around," Scoop yelled back, "and

introduce him to us. For we're crazy to meet him."

A few minutes later the speed boat zipped out of sight in the direction of Ashton.

"I didn't know," the leader grinned, "that the island hadn't changed hands when I called his bluff. But I see I was right."

"He'll telegraph to St. Louis for his pa," I said.

"Let him. By the time old money bag gets here we'll be back in Tutter licking the honey off our fingers and telling the people what we found behind the stone wall."

I was kind of worried over our mix-up with the smart kid. For I figured that the rich man could cause us a lot of grief if he wanted to. A fellow with a million dollars can do almost anything. We might even land up in jail.

What I didn't know was that we were heading into an adventure beside of which going to jail was tame. The thought of what I went through gives me the shivers. Yet I have to laugh. For of all the crazy stuff!

Did you ever hear of a man with a "sleeping toe"? No? Well, you're going to hear about one pretty quick!

CHAPTER VII

THE STOLEN SHOES

THE afternoon dragged along as we waited for Peg. It was four o'clock now. He should have been here hours ago. And to have to stall around this way, doing nothing, made us sore. For we realized how much need there was for quick work.

"When did you mail that post card?" I finally asked Scoop.

"Yesterday noon."

"And when do you figure Peg got it?"

"This morning."

"I bet it's still in the Steam Corners post office."

"I should have telephoned, I guess," the leader admitted. "Still, he told us himself that a card would be all right."

"If only we had a boat," I said, looking across the water. "Then we could row to the lock and get him."

"We have got a boat," Red reminded, with a laugh.

"Leave me out of it," shrugged Scoop, "if you're going to make the trip in the tub raft."

"Why not?" Red wanted to know.

"*Why not?* You'd know 'why not' if you had the job of paddling it. Besides, we can't all leave here. For the Stricker gang may blow in any minute. And how lovely for us to come back here and find our stuff gone. No, as much as I hate to stall around, the only thing for us to do, as I see it, is to wait for Peg to get our delayed card. And, to that point, if he goes to Steam Corners the first thing in the morning, he ought to be back here by nine-thirty."

"And how about the stone-wall business?" I reminded. "Are we going to put that off, too?"

"I have a hunch that we'll want to beat it for home in a hurry, once the wall is down. So it would be crazy for us to do that job first. Besides, Peg will want to be in on the fun with us. You know that. So let's wait for him."

"Just the same," I hung on, "I think we ought to find out who the caveman is."

"All right," Scoop grinned. "We'll let you call on him to-night after supper."

"Why not yourself?"

"I haven't any blacking for my shoes," he joked. "And I'd feel cheap to go there looking tacky."

"Well, I can't offer you my shoes," I grinned, "for they're three sizes smaller than yours. So the only other thing to do, I guess, is to watch for the caveman from the top of the ravine."

And that is exactly what we did do, though earlier we spread out and searched unsuccessfully for the bee tree. Scoop and Red had supper while I secretly watched the cave. Then I had supper alone. Putting the camp in order for the night, I joined my chums at the ravine, learning that the caveman hadn't come home yet.

Dusk came, sort of quiet and creeping-like; then darkness. The ravine was lost to our sight now. But we had ears. And by keeping them sharpened we figured that the man couldn't get into his cave without us hearing him, though whether we then would have the nerve to creep down there and take a peek at him through the vine screen was another matter. Certainly, Red wasn't coaxing us in advance to let him take the lead!

Then the moon came out. We watched it climb higher and higher among the stars. This was a lot better, we said, than hiding among the rocks in the dark. For one thing, we were safe now from a surprise attack.

Red's patience gave out at eleven o'clock.

"Aw, shucks!" he growled. "This is crazy stuff. Let's beat it up the hill and go to bed."

"Maybe we might just as well," I told the leader. "For it looks as though this cave geezer isn't going to come home to-night."

"I wonder if he got into the cave without us seeing him."

"How could he?"

"He may have a secret entrance. . . . Say, Red," came the grin, "do you want a job?"

"What doing?"

"Run down and see if he's there."

"Me?" the smaller one squeaked. "You must think I want to experiment with a pair of wings."

We went up the hill then, where Red and I got into our blankets. Nor were we long in going to sleep, for the day's fun and excitement had tired us out. At twelve-thirty the leader woke me up, with the not welcome news that it was my turn to stand guard. I got up, all right. But, as I say, I wasn't crazy about it.

How bright the moonlight was! I could see across the wide waters almost as well as in the daytime. And how beautiful the water was, with just enough of a riffle to turn the surface into quivering silver. Far across, the wooded shore was an irregular black patch, touched seemingly by

one end of the blanket of stars. Then overhead the blanket was lifted into a great arch, coming down again in the north, where I could see another wooded shore in black irregular outline. Off to the west, in the swamp, a hundred frog bands tooted in noisy rivalry. I could hear other night sounds, too. Once an owl about the size of my fist swooped close to my head, as though to show me that I wasn't so much. I might be able to paddle around in a tub raft and set up a tent, but I couldn't follow *it*. I saw bats, *too*. A whizz, a black streak, then they were gone.

Wide awake now, my thoughts turned curiously to Robinson Crusoe. How many hundreds of nights had the lonely islander sat in front of his cave, looking at this same moon? Oh, I thought, if only we could stay here forever! We could get a pair of goats to start with—I knew a boy in Tutter who had a pair that he wanted to sell cheap—and, of course, it would be no trick to get plenty of dogs and cats. We soon would have the island stocked up. And we could raise crops, too, and dry grapes for raisins. Then, if we could get rid of the old geezer in the hidden cave, we could live there in the rainy season. Could anything be more wonderful than a life like that!

Thinking of the cave brought the mystery into my mind. Then I thought of the honey. Next I thought of the Stricker gang and the rich kid. No doubt Bid and his crowd were camped somewhere along the canal bank. As for young smarty, he probably was in Ashton at the hotel.

Dog-gone! If only Peg had come to-day we could have worked on the bee tree in the moonlight. Then, at daybreak, we could have taken the honey up the canal to his uncle's house for safety. Now we'd have to fight for the honey. I couldn't doubt that for a minute. For it wouldn't be many hours after daybreak before the Strickers got here.

I was sitting down now with my back against a tree. And pretty soon I caught myself nodding. That never would do, I told myself, sitting up as straight and stiff as a corncob. But in spite of my determination to keep awake, I nodded again. And I kept on nodding, I guess, until I was dead to the world.

Our shipwreck that day put "shipwrecks" into my dreaming machinery. And what a crazy dream I had! I seemed to be Robinson Crusoe. Yet, I wasn't on the lonely island. I was traveling around in a big ship. We came to China, where I was sent to the Emperor's palace to

doctor a sick cat. And to reward me for quickly curing the cat, the Emperor took me into his private garden where he had three wonderful trees. The first one was a rubber tree with auto tires growing on it, the second was a palm tree covered with palm-leaf fans, and the third one was a cork tree. I was shown how the trees worked: A shake of the rubber tree, and down came a tire. The same with the palm tree. And to get corks off the cork tree, its owner had only to give a little shake for little corks and a big shake for big corks. He told me that I could have my pick of the three trees. So I said, "Eeenie-meenie minie mo," stopping at the cork tree. And when I got ready to leave I found out that I could carry the cork tree just as easy as anything. Nor did it seem to have roots. On the ocean again, a terrible storm came up. Down went the ship. Everybody was drowned except me. What saved me was my cork tree, which, of course, couldn't sink. I did a lot of swimming then. I swam a hundred miles, I guess. Maybe it was a thousand miles. Anyway, I swam and swam. When the sun was hot I rested in the shade of my cork tree. And when I was tuckered out from swimming I had the tree to float on.

Well, I finally came within sight of land. And

somehow I knew it was the island where the goats were. So I had to land there and get busy. But before I could get to land, a big hungry shark got his mean eyes on me and took after me. I dodged behind my cork tree. Tearing at me, its mouth open and its eyes shut, all ready to snap, the shark ran smack into the tree, getting a mouthful of cork. Trying it again, it got more cork. After a bit I noticed that it was acting queer. Only about a third of its body was under water. And it didn't seem able to make itself go. I saw then what was wrong. It had swallowed so much cork that it was floating with its propeller out of water. Wasn't that a *crazy* dream? A shark with a propeller, like a boat! Yet, in my dream it didn't seem crazy. It didn't even surprise me.

Well, another shark came along pretty soon, and it, too, got filled up on cork in the same way. Then another came, and still another. When I finally got to land, the bay was full of floating sharks. And with their propellers going full blast out of water, it was like a young cyclone.

"Jerry! Jerry!" a laughing voice cried in my ears, as I stood beside my faithful cork tree watching the helpless sharks. "Wake up. It's time for your morning bath."

"Sharks," I mumbled, blinking in the new sunlight. Then I looked all around. But, of course, I was unable to find any sharks!

Red and Scoop were prancing around in their birthday suits, ready for a swim.

"You're a peach of a camp guard," the leader kidded me.

"Did I go to sleep?" I yawned sheepishly.

"Oh, no! But everything seems to be all right. So don't let it worry you, old timer. Come on. The last one in is a sardine."

Following our dandy swim, we had breakfast. And while Red and I were washing the dishes, the leader searched high and low for his shoes. Later we found the shoes in the bushes, halfway down the hill. And there were marks here showing where some one with a man-sized back porch had sat down in the sand to put the shoes on. Evidently, though, they had been too small. And we could imagine the disgust with which the big-footed thief had thrown them away.

Puzzled to understand why the returned caveman had stolen the shoes in the first place—the biggest ones in camp—we made the further startling discovery that the man's feet had been bleeding. There was a slight trace of blood on one of the shoes. And we could see three black-red

drops in the left naked footprint in the white sand.

So queer in his actions, we were more curious than ever to see the mysterious caveman. But we wanted to do our squinting at him on the sly. For we didn't know what to expect from a geezer like him.

CHAPTER VIII

CANNIBALS!

We saw nothing of the queer caveman that morning, though we took turns watching the hidden cave from the top of the ravine. Was the Bible peddler in bed, making up the sleep that he had lost during the night? Scoop wanted to go down and find out. But as neither Red nor I would go with him, he finally quit talking about it.

It came ten o'clock, then ten-thirty, and still our big chum hadn't showed up. We knew now that something was wrong. And to find out the truth, we paddled south to the mainland in our tub raft, from where Scoop lit out up the tow path in the direction of the lock tender's house, three miles farther east.

Thus left alone, Red and I put in an uneasy hour. What if the Strickers came now? We'd be in a pretty pickle if they got to the island ahead of us. And, to that point, it certainly was a piece of good luck for us that they hadn't gotten

here earlier. For we really had expected to see them in the wide waters right after breakfast. Besides, it wasn't to be doubted that smarty would be back soon. And what if his father came with him, or the sheriff?

Yes, it would have been a sickening sensation to Red and I if we had heard smarty's speed boat coming into the wide waters from the west; or if the Stricker's rowboats had come into sight from there. But to our further good fortune Scoop showed up first.

"Peg's sick in bed with scarlet fever," was the bad news he brought us. "So I didn't go in the house. Anyway, that wouldn't have done any good, for the poor kid's out of his mind. I asked Uncle Jupe if he knew where the bee tree was. But he shook his head. All he could tell me, he said, was that it was somewhere on the island."

Red threw up his hands.

"What are we going to do now?" he cried helplessly.

"*Do?* We'll have to search the island until we locate the bee tree, of course. That's the only thing we can do."

"And did you find out anything about the caveman?" I then inquired.

"No. Uncle Jupe just stared at me in surprise

when I told him that some mysterious man was living on the island. He thought I was kidding him, I guess. So I didn't say anything more about it."

We hurried back to the island to start searching for the bee tree. And as that by far was our most important job, we temporarily put all thought of the hidden cave and its queer owner out of our minds, though, on top of stealing Scoop's shoes, it now was our discovery, on landing, that the man had been into our food while we were away. Still, he hadn't taken much—that is, he hadn't lugged the best of our stuff off to his cave, as might have been expected under the circumstances. As evidence of the secret visit, the seemingly hungry one had left a spoon in the butter bowl. And our loaf of bread and link of Bologna were considerably shorter. The caveman evidently liked our grub better than his own! But he'd get no further chance to help himself, we told one another grimly. Hereafter we'd guard our stuff night and day.

We had an early dinner. Then we spread out in further search of the bee tree. Red had the south shore. And all of a sudden I heard him coming through the bushes like a house afire.

"Cannibals!" he panted, like a wheezing bellows.

"Go lay an egg," I told him.

"Honest, Jerry. Three boat loads."

"But it can't be *cannibals,* Red," I reasoned with him. "Remember where you are, kid. This isn't Oglesby."

"I know it sounds crazy," he admitted. "But come and see for yourself."

Getting Scoop, who was near by, we ran to the south shore, learning that the "cannibals" were Bid Stricker and his gang. Half naked, they had daubed their faces and bodies with red and blue clay. Acting as cannibal chief, Bid had a pair of brass curtain rings tied to his ears. There was another ring under his nose, too. He was some doll, let me tell you!

There were three boats, as Red had said. And that puzzled us for a moment or two. For, as we knew, the enemy had started out in two boats. Then we got wise to the fact that the rich kid had joined them, having rented a rowboat in Ashton, where his fancy speed boat, we learned later, had gone on the bum.

Eight against three! It looked pretty bad for us. And what wouldn't we have given just then to have had old Peg there! For hefty can lick any three kids in Bid's gang. But, as the leader said, we couldn't save ourselves by wishing for

help. We'd have to fight it out alone and do the best we could.

Under his orders we circled to our hilltop camp. Here we each got a slingshot and a pocketful of pebbles. Thus armed, we got behind separate trees.

Landing on the island, the cannibals let out a lot of blood-curdling whoops. Then we heard them dancing around on the beach, very much as real cannibals would have done under the same circumstances. Smarty, of course, knew just where our camp was. So it wasn't very long before we saw the leader poke his curtain rings through the lower bushes. This was the very chance I had been looking for. And aiming, I let fly. Boy, oh, boy, did old ring-in-the-nose ever dance a jig when I hit him on the bare shins! Then I wound up my trusty slingshot and peppered him a hot one on his painted bread basket.

He gave a wild whoop at that, yelling savagely to his armed warriors to fill me full of arrows. But they couldn't hit me, for I was behind the tree. Putting out my cap to fool them into wasting more arrows, which, of course, were just willow shafts weighted at the tip with small nails, I got in a couple of good licks while they were tuning up their bows for a third volley.

AS CANNIBAL CHIEF, BID HAD A PAIR OF CURTAIN RINGS TIED TO HIS EARS.

Nor were Scoop and Red asleep, either. I guess not! Their shots were as true to the mark as mine. We were holding the fort, all right. And it was fun, too. Still, I didn't like it. For outnumbered as we were, I figured that sooner or later we'd get the worst of it.

Bid split up his gang after a bit. Leaving four warriors to carry on the attack, he went back to the shore with the others to unload the boats and get the camp in order. This job finished, he started an attack from behind—only none of us knew that he had climbed the east side of the hill, at our backs, until I got a blunt willow arrow on the tight part of my pants as I was stooping over behind my tree.

Oh, painful, painful memories! Did I ever *jump!*

Well, it was all off with us then. But there were some badly banged-up cannibal shins, let me tell you, before the others got our slingshots away from us. Yelling in their victory, they paraded us down the hill to their camp, where they roped us to a tree.

The cannibal chief looked me over with a pretended hungry grin. Then he felt of my arms and legs to see how fat I was. Say, I wish I could describe him to you just as I saw him then. But

I don't think I could in a hundred years. For a crazier looking kid I never saw in all my life. He was so crazy looking he was funny. Even to his prisoners of war!

"Beefsteak," he smacked, patting my stomach.

Then Jimmy Stricker came along and felt of me in the same hungry way.

"Soup," he smacked, in pattern of his cousin.

"Aw, let's fry him," spoke up another one of the half-naked smart alecks. "For I don't like soup. Every time I eat it I burn the end of my nose in the dish."

"How about stewing him?" still another starving cannibal suggested.

They kept up this kind of crazy talk. But it didn't scare me. For I knew they didn't dare to harm me. And, to that point, how tickled they would have been if I had started begging for my life! But that is where I fooled them.

The rich kid was strutting around in high feather.

"Who's winners now?" he threw at us.

"Did you send for papa?" purred Scoop.

"I'd like to soak you one," came the quick scowl.

"Go ahead. I'm tied. So you're perfectly safe."

"You must think I'm scared of you."

"I don't know why you should be. For I never hit a *baby* yet."

"Say, if I get mad, you'll be sorry for that kind of talk."

"What do you do when you get mad?—throw your playthings around?"

"Keep on, and see what you git."

"Don't make me weep."

The kid walked off then.

"You'll weep, all right," was the mean threat he threw back, "before we get through with you."

CHAPTER IX

THE WHISPERING VOICE

It was the general scheme of Bid and his gang, we learned, to keep us tied up until they had taken the honey out of the bee tree. But it is to be said to their credit that they used us good during the short time that we were their captives. At supper they shoved us a share of everything they had to eat. And when we wanted a drink they got it for us. As for the rich kid, he was told that if he touched us while we were tied up he'd get a kick in the seat of the pants. Yet, though I'm giving the Strickers their just dues, don't get the idea that we had any new love for them. I guess not! I just want to be fair, that's all.

Realizing that we couldn't very well go to sleep tied to a tree, Bid put us in a guarded tent when the camp settled down for the night. And in the next hour Scoop did a lot of twisting and squirming. Wondering at this, I was glad when he finally spoke my name in a whisper.

"Yes?" I quickly whispered back.

"Got a knife in your pocket?"

"Sure thing."

"I've been twisting my wrist ropes. And if you get in back of me I believe I can reach into your pocket. But go easy—don't let the guard hear you moving around."

Here a head came into the tent.

"Quit your whispering," Hib Milden ordered crossly, "and go to sleep."

After that we lay perfectly still for the better part of an hour, pretending that we really were asleep. The stillness made Hib drowsy. We could hear him yawning outside. And squinting under the tent, we saw him nodding in the moonlight, with his back against a tree. Remembering my own similar experiences, I wondered curiously if he was dreaming about cork trees and sharks with propellers!

Now was our chance! Edging up to Scoop, I sort of guided his hand into my pants pocket. Turning and squirming, we finally got the knife out. Getting the big blade open, he sawed at my wrist ropes until they dropped off. Then I quickly did the same for him and Red. Everything was working lovely. All we had to do now was to scoot.

"Ho-hum!" yawned Hib. And what do you know if he didn't get on his feet and come into the tent with a flashlight! He saw quickly enough that we were free. And before we could stop him he had jumped out of the tent, yelling to beat the cars.

Rolling under the back of the tent as the quickest way out, we scooted for the bushes like three hunted jack rabbits. Boy, did I ever stretch my legs! I knew I had to, if I expected to get away. For every fellow in the camp was up now. There was an awful hubbub.

Hib got his eyes on us.

"There they go," he yelled at the top of his voice.

"Head for the raft," cried the leader, when the whole gang took after us.

I figured that it would be a good thing for us to separate. So I didn't follow on the leader's heels, like Red, but kept straight ahead, planning to hit the island's north shore and then circle to the raft.

Running into the wind, which had switched from the south into the north, I soon came to the moonlit ravine where the big cave was. In scooting across an open space, the enemy got sight of me, being closer than I had suspected.

Pumping my legs down the windy ledge path that passed the hidden cave, I suddenly got the idea of escaping from the others by diving through the hanging vines—though why the crazy notion came to me of throwing myself on the caveman's mercy, instead of the enemy's, I don't know. I just did it without thinking twice, and that's the only explanation I can give you.

Having come to the leafy screen, I threw it up and tumbled inside. My heart was thumping. And I was panting like a tuckered puppy. Nor was I a moment too soon. For scarcely had I whipped my legs through the vines than the enemy passed the cave on the run.

There wasn't a sound in the cave, outside of my own panting. And cold now in the thought of what I had done, I listened for another's heavy breathing, or other human sounds. But I heard nothing. Then the joyful thought came to me that maybe the caveman was away. I had some matches. And striking one, I saw, as I had begun to suspect, that the bed was empty. I quickly looked under the bed. Nothing there, either. Hot dog! Providence, or whatever you call it, had safely turned me in here. It was nothing short of that.

I figured now on hiding here until the Strickers

had gone back to their camp on the other side of the island. Then I would cut a bee line for the east shore, where my two chums were waiting for me. I didn't know what Scoop's plans were, but I had a hunch that he'd head for the tow path. With eight against us, the island wasn't a healthy place for us now. To win out would take strategy. And that could better be planned some place else.

Well, two or three minutes passed. I wasn't panting so hard now. And waiting there in the dark for the enemy to come back up the path, so that I could get away in safety, I got the scare of my lifetime.

The deep silence of the cave suddenly was broken by a weird whispering voice. I couldn't tell at first where the voice came from. And at the moment I crazily was reminded of a story I had read in the *Arabian Nights* where unseen spirits had whispered out of the air. It was that way now. The voice that I heard was in the air. Here, there and all around me. Nor was it a human voice, either.

"Who-o-o-o? Who-o-o-o?" If you'll say that word ever so slowly, and under your breath, you'll know what the whispering was like. I thought of an owl. I found, though, in striking

another match, that there was no owl in the cave. The light sort of helped me to trace the weird sound. It came from the cupboard. No, it came from *behind* the cupboard. The stone wall! The closer I got to the wall the plainer I could hear the strange voice. "Who-o-o-o? Who-o-o-o?"

Maybe it wasn't a question. But it sounded like a question to me. And as such I have written it down. "Who-o-o-o? Who-o-o-o?" Owl-like, of course. But, as I say, it wasn't an owl. It was something else. *And it was on the inside of the stone wall.*

A very little bit of that kind of spooky truck goes a long ways with me. And having had my fill, I struck out for the door. But I stopped almost as soon as I started. For I had heard footfalls. And heavy ones, too. Coming down the ledge path.

Right off I knew that it was the Rev. Joshua Jonathan Jacobs. And not wanting the queer Bible peddler to catch me in his hidden cave, I ducked under the bed. One duck and I was there, as far back as I could get . . . and was I ever scared!

Then the Strickers galloped up the path, stopping outside of the cave.

"I thought I saw a man," said Bid.

"Me, too," said Hib.

"But where did he go to?"

"I bet it was Jerry Todd."

"No, it was too big for Jerry."

"Maybe it was a ghost. For I heard that an old hermit killed himself in this ravine. He cut his throat with a razor."

"*Good* night! Let's get out of here."

The "ghost" in the meantime had dodged into the cave, sort of panting-like. I couldn't see him, but somehow I knew that he was standing in the dark listening to what was being said outside of his cave. And how glad I was at the moment that I had a safe hiding place you can't imagine. He and his crazy lizard! They were a good pair to keep away from, I told myself.

After a bit a match scraped on the rocky wall. In the light that sprang up I caught sight of a pair of big feet fastened on thin legs. I could tell that the legs were thin by the way the pants fitted them. The light traveled across the room to a lamp on the table. There was a click of glass as the chimney was put in the pocket of the metal burner. Then I had a brighter light to see by.

The man's heels were toward me now. So I

risked an eye. The Rev. Joshua Jonathan Jacobs, I thus learned, was a very tall, thin man with an awfully hairy neck. He had on a preacher's coat, black and close-fitting, like a tube, with a skirt reaching to his knees.

Sitting down in a chair he started to undress, having first taken off his hat and coat. Now he took off his shoes, then his tight pants, then his socks.

Never had I seen such big feet in all my life. They were whoppers. The big toes were at least three inches long. The big toe on the right foot seemingly was out of kilter. Its owner petted and patted it. He was trying, though without success, to wriggle it. He could wriggle the big toe on the left foot, but not the one on the right foot.

After a bit the man got up and went across the cave to where a long white nightshirt hung on a corner of the cupboard. Getting into his nightshirt, I expected him to blow out the lamp, like a follow does when he's all ready to tumble into bed. Instead, he went to his clothes and began unloading the pockets. Letting out my neck, I saw a big wad of greenbacks. I could hear silver money, too.

The money slowly and carefully counted to the

last penny, its owner went over to the oil stove. Moving the stand on which the stove sat, and scraping away the loose sand, he got a metal box out of a hole in the stone floor. I knew it was a money box. And was I ever excited! I was learning secrets, all right. Scoop's and Red's eyes sure would pop out when they heard about this.

"Who-o-o-o? Who-o-o-o?" Again the strange whispering voice filled the cave. Startled, the man let the box fall to the floor. Money flew in all directions. I could see rolls of five-dollar and ten-dollar bills. I could see literally *hundreds* and *thousands* of silver dollars and half dollars. Some of the silver money rolled under the bed. I itched to grab it. But I held back. For it wasn't my money.

Tiptoeing to the cupboard, the man stood there like a statue for several minutes. I heard the cupboard door click. Then he quietly came back to where the money was. Getting on his knees, he started picking up the scattered coins and greenbacks with long nervous fingers. Watching him, I never suspected my peril until one of the snaky hands started feeling around under the bed.

CHAPTER X

TRAPPED IN THE CAVE

In feeling around under his bed for the money that he had dropped, the caveman didn't crook his back very low, which was a lucky thing for me. And finishing the job of picking up the money without having touched me with his snaky-fingered arms, he locked the metal box and carefully put it back in its hiding place under the oil-stove stand, after which he blew out the lamp and rolled into bed.

I wasn't a bit scared now. For escape was easy. But it was my scheme not to dig out right away, for the better plan, I thought, would be to wait until the old geezer in the upper berth was sound asleep. Then he'd never know that I had been here.

From what I had seen I knew he was a miser. And a very rich miser, too. It must have taken him years to save up all this money, I thought. And what if he should die without telling anyone his secret? Would the money be mine? Of

course, I didn't want him to die in order to get the money—I don't mean that. I just thought of it in that way. And, to that point, even if he did die, some relative probably would step in ahead of me. For relatives always come first. Still, the relative wouldn't *know* where the money was hid unless I told him. I sort of had the advantage, in a way.

The continued creaking of the overhead springs, as the sleepless one shimmied around, first on one rib and then on another, set my giggler to working. Wouldn't old fuzzy-foot jump, though, I thought, if I suddenly jabbed him with a nice long hat pin! He'd bound so high on the point of the pin that he'd crack the roof of the cave. Or, like the rhyme, he'd bound so high that he'd touch the sky and never come down till the Fourth-of-July.

Ho-hum! Yawning, I thought of Scoop and Red. Were they waiting for me at the tub raft? Probably. Well, came the sudden determination, they wouldn't have to wait much longer. For I was fast losing patience with old Jeremiah Jerusalem. And if he didn't go to sleep pretty soon, I'd skin out anyway. Such was my intention. Certainly, I didn't went my chums to think that I had been retaken by the enemy. For in going

back to the south shore camp to rescue me, they easily could get into trouble themselves.

And now what are you going to say about me when I tell you that I actually lay there under the caveman's bed and went sound asleep! Dumb-bell stuff, huh? Well, I guess you're right. To tell the truth, I haven't the slightest recollection of dropping off. But that's the way it is with a kid when he's dead sleepy. No matter how hard he tries to keep awake he goes to sleep in spite of himself. One minute his eyes are open and the next minute they're shut. Anyway, you must remember that it was after one o'clock when this happened; and remember, too, that I had lost a lot of sleep the preceding night.

The first I knew that I had been asleep was when I woke up with a start several hours later. But even then I didn't remember where I was. Boy, was I ever stiff! Starting to rise up, I bumped my head on the bottom of the bed. What the dickens? . . . I thought for a moment that some one had beaned me with a club. Then everything came back to me with a rush.

Even having stupidly dropped asleep, it wouldn't have been so bad for me if I had woke up ahead of the caveman. For I could have skinned out then. But here I was completely

trapped under the bed. For daylight having come, the miser was up ahead of me. I could hear the slop! slop! slop! of his big slippers as he shuffled back and forth between the cupboard and the oil stove, sort of humming to himself in his work. Eggs were sputtering in a frying pan. I could smell bacon, too. And coffee.

What should I do?—lay here until the chance came to get away without him seeing me? Or should I crawl out from under the bed when his back was turned and scoot for the door? I probably could get outside, all right. But wouldn't it be bad for me to have him see me? He'd suspect that I had been spying on him. And to protect the secret of his hidden money he might even go so far as to pull a gun on me. Geeminy crickets! Rather than take a chance like that, it would be better to lay here for a month, I decided.

No matter what kind of a fix a boy gets in, it's hard for him to completely lose his appetite. And as the breakfast preparations went on, with more and more good smells filling the cave, I found it hard to keep my tongue from hanging out. Oh, if only I could make myself invisible and thus share in this breakfast of bacon and eggs and coffee! Or if I could transform myself into

a dog, even, and bark for the scraps! But, alas, I was no wizard! All I could do was to lay there and suffer.

Getting dishes from the cupboard, the humming worker put an extra plate on the table. And watching him on the sly I wondered at this. Was he expecting company for breakfast? It would seem so. I thought of the whispering voice. *Good* night! Was he going to share his breakfast with a spook? Or was the mysterious whisperer much less of a spook than I had imagined?

The table set, the cook dished up the bacon and eggs, still humming to himself in a sort of contented way. Then he poured the coffee into two big cups.

"Now, Jerry Todd," he drawled, "if you'll jest crawl out from under that bed, an' wash your face an' hands an' brush your hair, we'll set up an' have breakfast together."

Did you ever have the feeling that your blood had suddenly turned to ice water? Well, that is the way I felt now. Gee, I thought I was hid. Yet he had known all the time that I was there —knew my name even! Talk about *wizardry! He* had the gift, all right.

"Sorry, Jerry," the not unkind voice went on,

"that I kain't let you have some real cow's cream fur your coffee, seein' as how you're my company this mornin'. But it's a fact I hain't had no luck this hot summer keepin' my milk from sourin'. So some time back I took to usin' condensed milk, which hain't bin very satisfyin' to a person of my refined an' elegant tastes, me bein' a gentleman born, as I modestly admit, an' also a gentleman of the cloth. But, even so, I've managed to git along tol'able well. I'll jest let you pour your own milk, so that you'll git all you want. An' them eggs on your side of the platter is fried hard, fur boys, I've learned, usually like eggs cooked hard. Now, step lively, Sonny, an' git yourself tidied up neat, like I say, fur your breakfast things is gittin' cold. An' it hain't purlite fur you to keep your host waitin', 'specially when he's a ol' man, an' as hungry as I be."

Well, there was nothing in the voice that sounded like sudden death. So, getting my wits together as best I could, I guardedly crawled out from under my shell. Anyway, that was the only thing I could do under the circumstances. But to my surprise no attempt was made to head me off. To the contrary, the caveman, seated at the breakfast table, beamed at me as though

he was tickled pink to have me there, which in itself proved that he wasn't half as dangerous as I had let myself believe. Yet, it was queer, I thought, that he should let me off so easily. I couldn't understand it

I found myself looking into a pair of solemn gray eyes set close together in a thin face, the sides of which were upholstered with bushy cheek whiskers. There weren't any whiskers on the chin or straight upper lip—just on the cheeks. The thin black hair was parted in the middle and plastered down in scallops, one scallop over each temple. These scallops gave the thin face dignity, or whatever you call it. And at the moment, as I sort of favorably measured the man up one side and down the other, I found it hard to believe that he actually had taken Scoop's shoes with the thought of keeping them. As for later getting into our grub, that must have been a joke, I concluded. He was odd looking, of course. Yet in every way it was a pleasing, honest oddness. Besides, it wasn't to be forgotten that the "Rev." on his letterhead stamped him as being a preacher. So whatever his secrets were they couldn't be dark secrets, as we had let ourselves believe.

"They's water an' a wash basin over there," I

was told in the same kind tone of voice. "An' bein' company, you kin git a clean towel out of the right-hand cupboard drawer."

Satisfied now that I was as safe here as in my own home, I made good use of the wash basin and towel, after which I slid into my chair at the table. My host, as he called himself, then bowed his head for a moment or two. And remembering my manners, I did the same.

We didn't do much talking during the meal. For one thing, I was too hungry to talk. And the man across the table from me, of whom I had lost all fear, as I say, seemed wrapped in his thoughts.

"Mebbe," he spoke up in the close of the meal, "I ought to introduce myself."

"I know who you are," I smiled. "You're the Rev. Joshua Jonathan Jacobs."

That surprised him.

"Also," I told him, "I know what your main business is. You're a Bible peddler."

Choking, he got up and went to the water pail for a drink. Then he stopped at the stove and fussed around with the pans. But I could see that he wasn't thinking about the pans. He was thinking about something else.

Finally he came back to the table.

"It puzzles me to understand how you found this cave so easily. Fur I thought I had it hid."

"We wouldn't have found it if we hadn't known it was here."

"Oh! . . . Then you hain't alone?"

"There's three of us," I told him.

"All boys?"

I nodded.

"But what brought you here in the first place? —curiosity?"

"We were searching for still another chum. And we came to see if you had made a prisoner of him."

"Me?"

"We were wrong, of course."

"But I don't understand why you should have suspected *me*. Did you know that I was livin' here?"

"No, sir. We found it out when we got here."

"Then the other boys have bin here, too?"

"Yes, sir."

"When was that?"

"The day you saw us in our tub raft."

He stared.

"The day I saw you in . . . *what?"*

"Our tub raft," I repeated. "You know when I mean—the day of the big storm."

"I swan! I don't know what you're talkin' 'bout."

"Wasn't it you," I inquired quickly, "who stood barefooted behind the tree and watched us land in our tub raft?"

He slowly shook his head.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" I cried, staring at him.

"Mebbe," he suggested, when I had told him about the footprints in the sand, "you're gittin' me mixed up with the ol' lizard hunter who's bin hangin' 'round here lately. Fur *he* was barefooted when I seed him last night."

"Last night!" I cried.

"He was here the early part of last week. An' last night I seed him ag'in. He was sittin' beside the spring soakin' his bare feet."

Well, of all things! Instead of the caveman, who now seemed to have no part in the mystery of the vanished lizard, it was the old Professor, himself, who had done the barefoot stuff, later helping himself to our grub. But why had he followed us to the isalnd? Or, rather, learning our plans, why had he hurried here ahead of us? And why was he going barefooted?

"Mr. Jacobs," I said impulsive-like, "I'm go-

ing to tell you the truth. We thought that you were in cahoots with the old Professor in some kind of crooked work."

"Me?" and the thin face looked pained.

I began at the beginning and told him the whole story.

"Well, I swan! An' you thought that *I* had the missin' lizard, heh?"

"It isn't the first time that we twisted the tail of the wrong theory," I laughed.

"Where are these chums of your'n?" he then asked me.

"They're waiting for me at the east end of the island."

"An' they don't know that you dodged in here last night in the dark?"

"No, sir."

"Um. . . . An' who's the other boys who was chasin' you?"

"The Stricker gang."

"You say they're enemies of your'n?"

I nodded, scowling.

"Did you tell *them* anything 'bout me?"

"No, sir."

"An' they don't know I'm livin' here?"

"No, sir."

"Um. . . ."

With the whispering voice in mind, and the mysterious stone wall, I decided to do some questioning myself.

"You sure picked out a queer place to live," I began, squinting around at the white sandstone walls.

"Um. . . ."

"No one would expect to find a *Bible peddler* living in a hidden cave," I followed up. "But probably you've got a reason."

"Yes," he admitted, sort of quiet-like. "I've got a reason."

I looked toward the cupboard.

"Are you hiding something here?"

"Hidin' somethin'?" he repeated, only his eyes, instead of following mine, went to the oil stove. "Oh, no!" he added quickly.

"I thought you might have some kind of a whispering spook shut up behind your cupboard," I laughed.

"What makes you say that?"

I suddenly checked myself. For I saw what would happen if I told him that I had heard the whispering voice. That would be the same as telling him that I had seen him counting his money. Whereas if I kept my mouth shut he might think that I had been asleep. Even

though I had no fear of him, it was better, I decided, to play safe.

"I was just joking," I laughed. Then, to switch his thoughts, I asked: "How did you know that my name is Jerry Todd? Are you a mind reader?"

"No, I hain't no mind reader."

"Did you see me under the bed when you came home last night?"

"No."

"But if you didn't see me," I puzzled, "how did you know that I was there?"

"Well, as I recall," came dryly, "they was an awful snore come out from under the bed 'round two-three o'clock this mornin'. Gittin' up to investigate, as was proper, I found a sleepin' boy there, whom I naturally figured was the missin' Jerry Todd."

I saw into the "mystery" now. The Strickers had spoken my name when they were talking about me in front of the cave. And remembering that, he thus had known who I was. Simple enough when it was explained!

Breakfast over, the old man gathered up the dishes.

"I'll wash 'em," he said, "while you wipe 'em."

I hate to do dishes.

"My chums will be looking for me," I told him, glancing eagerly toward the door.

But if he heard that he never let on.

"Um. . . . You kin use that ol' shirt on the foot of the bed. Now, don't burn yourself in the rinse water. An' be sure an' wipe everything dry."

Well, I set to work—having had a free breakfast I couldn't very well do otherwise. And all the time that I stood there beside him, wiping while he washed, I could see that he was thinking.

Our job completed, we were putting the dishes back in the cuboard when the Stricker gang came down the ledge path, laughing and talking.

"It's a cinch," said Bib, "that they aren't on the island."

"We've searched everywhere," said Jimmy.

"And their tent's gone."

"We should have confiscated the tent," spoke up smarty, remembering Scoop's big word.

"Aw! . . ." growled Bid. "We don't want their truck. Let 'em go. The island and the bee tree's ours now."

"But where *is* the bee tree?" said Jimmy.

"We'll find it."

"It really is my tree," said smarty, sort of important-like. "But you kids can have the honey."

Here another boy came down the path on the gallop.

"Say, Bid," panted Hib Milden.

"Well, say it."

"I know where the other gang is. I just saw them sailing across the wide waters in a tub raft. I could see Scoop and Red. Jerry was behind the sail, I guess."

Bid laughed in his mean way.

"Here's hoping that they have a pleasant journey home. And won't we give them the horselaugh, though, when we get back to Tutter with our honey! . . . Well, come on, gang, and shake a leg. For we've got to find that bee tree."

I was hot in the thought that Scoop and Red had sailed away without taking the trouble to try and find me. Fine chums they were! What I'd tell them when I got home.

Yet, angry as I was, their actions surprised and puzzled me. Never had they done a thing like this before. Always we had stuck together. I couldn't understand it.

When everything was quiet outside of the cave, the old man sat down and took off his slippers. And thus getting a close-up of his big bare feet, I was more amazed than ever at their enormous size. Talk about canal boats!

"What's the matter with that big toe?" I pointed. "Can't you wriggle it?"

The gray eyes soberly sought mine.

"Jerry, if I confide in you 'bout this queer toe of mine, will you promise not to go 'round talkin' 'bout it to other people?"

"What's the matter with it?" I asked curiously, when the required promise had been given.

"That toe," he then told me, "is hypnotized. It's sound asleep. Yes, 'tis," he added quickly, seeing the doubting look on my face. "It's bin that way since the latter part of last August."

Having trusted him so completely, it made me sore to have him thus try to string me.

"Back up," I scowled. "I'm no goof."

"Jerry, take a closer look at that toe. Don't you see anything *queer* 'bout it?"

The toe looked dirty to me.

"Why don't you wash it?" I hinted.

"It's a black man's toe—a cannibal's. It hain't *my* toe at all."

"What did you do," I grinned in spite of myself, "borrow it from a cannibal and then forget to return it?"

"Jerry," he changed the subject, "how would you like to have me help you git that wild honey?"

That was talk more to my liking.

"Hot dog!" I yipped.

"I know where the big bee tree is. But in return fur the honey you've got to promise to stay with me fur a few days an' help me keep a sharp eye on this queer toe of mine. If it shows the least signs of wakin' up, you're to take me an' tie me hand an' foot. Then I won't be able to do nobody any harm. I figure that Purfessor Biddypass will git here before the twenty-eighth, which is next Monday. An', to that p'int, it hain't likely that the toe will wake up before its year is up, it bein' put to sleep by the Purfessor on the twenty-eighth day of last August. Still, they is a risk. You kin see that. An' bein' a conscientious, honest man, I've got to play safe. Fur even if these Stricker boys do be enemies of your'n, as you say, the last thing I want to do is to chew off one of their arms or legs. Great guns—no! Jest think how awful I'd feel, me a gentleman born an' also a gentleman of the cloth, to have it furever on my conscience that I had chawed off a boy's arm. Turrible, turrible! What we've got to do, Jerry, as I see it, is to play some kind of a trick on these Stricker boys, me an' you, an' git them safely away from here. That, too, will clear the way fur us to git the

honey, which, I imagine, is the thing of biggest importance in your mind."

Well, I didn't know whether to yip my head off at the foolish old man, or play safe and beat it. Such a crazy story! Yet he showed in his trembling, frightened actions that he actually believed every word of what he was telling me. So, in a way, I was puzzled as well as amused.

"Jerry, I kin see what's in your mind," then came in a pained voice. "You've got the idear that I hain't quite right in the top part of my head. But I be. An' I kin prove it to you if you'll jest set down an' listen to me fur a few minutes."

Crazy as the "cannibal toe" idea was, I was curious to hear the rest of the story. So I sat down.

CHAPTER XI

THE SLEEPING TOE

HITCHING his chair along the cave floor so that he could park his big bare feet in comfort on the bed, the Bible peddler leaned back, his hands sort of arched on his stomach, and began his story.

"I don't s'pose," he said, with a dreamy look in his eyes, "that you ever heard tell of Walla-Walla, the civilized man eater."

"No, sir," I grinned. Walla-Walla! That was a good name for a cannibal, all right.

"Fur several years back," the old man went on, "Walla-Walla has bin a big attraction in Ringling Brothers' side-show. Born a cannibal, they hain't no one in the world, strange to say, who kin beat him playin' chess. He's smart, Walla-Walla is. I first got 'quainted with him when I was app'inted to missionary duty in the traveling circus, me bein' a gentleman of the cloth, as I say."

This was about the tenth time that he had

said that he was "a gentleman of the cloth." I didn't know what he meant. So I asked him about it.

"That," he explained, "is jest another way of sayin' that I'm a' ordained minister. Well, me an' Walla-Walla we got quite friendly. To all the other circus people he had to talk in signs, not knowin' the English language, pattin' his stomick when he wanted fried beefsteak an' gurglin', sort of, when he wanted a drink of water. He got to be purty smart in his signs, too, an' anybody furmiliar with him could tell from the way he patted his stomick whether he wanted his beefsteak well done that day or jest mejum. An' in gurglin' fur a drink, he had one kind of a gurgle fur water, another kind fur coffee, an' still another kind fur root beer, which he was awful fond of."

"What did he do when he wanted a toothpick?" I joked.

"Toothpick? Now, what was it Walla-Walla did when he wanted a toothpick? Um. . . . Let me think."

"Maybe he picked his teeth with his fork," was my further nonsense.

"No. Fur considerin' his ancestry, Walla-Walla had awful good table manners. An' he

"HAVIN' BIN TOLD MY STORY IN CONFIDENCE, HE PUT MY BLACK TOE TO SLEEP."

Jerry Todd in the Whispering Cave. *Page* 113

wouldn't 'a' made any sech impolite use of his fork as that."

"Could he crow like a woodpecker?"

The thin face brightened.

"That's it! When he wanted a toothpick he jest went peck! peck! like a woodpecker."

"Fine!" I laughed. "Now let's hear the rest of it."

"As I say, Walla-Walla had signs fur things like water an' coffee. But to me he always talked in his native tongue, fur havin' done missionary work in his islands I understood the language. Bein' the only one in the circus that he could talk to, him not knowin' English, as I say, he took a great fancy to me, tellin' me things 'bout hisself that no one else had any idear of. One day he confided to me that he was gittin' awful sick of beefsteak an' gravy. He wanted some of the good ol' meat, he said, smackin' his thick lips, a faraway look in his hungry eyes."

"What do you mean?—that he actually wanted to make a *meal* of somebody?"

"Exactly."

"Whoop-a-la!" I yipped. "This is getting exciting."

"Well, as you kin imagine, I was awful shocked, me bein' a gentleman born, as I say, an' also a

gentleman of the cloth. I give him a good religious talkin' to. But it didn't do much good. He still said he'd like to go back to his native islands an' engage in his ol' habits. With all the money that he had saved up from his circus job, he could live high, he said, with meat three times a day.

"Well, it wasn't very long after that before a canvasman come up missin'. A little fat feller. He went to bed at night, an' in the mornin' he was *gone*. Now, I kain't *swear* that he was eat up, but I *do* know that a pile of picked white bones that wasn't cow bones nor any other kind of four-legged animal bones was found in a secluded willow patch near that town a few days later. Moreover, Walla-Walla had a stomick on him like a gorged balloon. An' at times I seed him smackin' his thick lips, sort of reminiscent-like. Greatly distressed, I had about decided to go to Mr. Ringling with my suspicions, so that in case I was right no one else in the circus would be eat up on the sly, when, in travelin' from one town to another one night, they was an awful railroad smash-up. My right toe was cut clean off in the accident, an' strange to say Walla-Walla's big right toe was cut off, too. They took us to the nearest hospital, puttin' us in the same room, an' what do you know if the

blunderin' surgeon didn't go an' sew the right toe on the wrong foot, only we didn't know that we each had got the wrong toe until the bandages was took off."

"What you needed was another railroad wreck," I joked. "Then you could have switched the toes again and had them put on right."

"Yes, we could 'a' done that," he nodded. "I suggested it, in fact. But Walla-Walla wasn't in favor of it. He was awful tickled over his new white toe. An' later when he was dressed up in civilized clothes he wore a shoe with a hole cut in it so the toe could hang out fur people to look at an' admire. An' in other ways the blunderin' surgeon's mistake was a lucky thing fur him, fur the white toe bein' a gentleman's toe his manners improved a lot, an' him bein' more of a freak than ever, havin' one white toe an' nine black ones, the circus management doubled his salary. But what was his good luck was my misfortune. That black toe was a big disgrace to me. An' worse, it bein' a *cannibal's* toe, I found the *awfullest* thoughts comin' into my hitherto wholly refined an' genteel mind. Beefsteak an' gravy didn't seem to satisfy me no more. I kept hungerin' fur somethin' else. I couldn't quite figure out what was the matter with

me until one day when I was ridin' on a street car. They was a big fat lady in the seat ahead of me. I kept lookin' at her big ears. They was plump, puffy, pink ears. I jest couldn't take my eyes off them ears. I found myself, to my growin' horror, wantin' to lean forward an' *take a bite!* Jest imagine that!—me a gentleman born, an' also a gentleman of the cloth, wantin', like a cannibal, to chew a lady's ear off. An' right in public, too.

"Well, I tried to hold back. But the cannibal impulse in me was too strong fur me to resist. Gittin' set fur a big juicy bite, I leaned forward, closer an' closer, my tongue drippin'. Then the street car stopped an' the lady got off. I got off, too, my eyes still fastened on her fat ears. But I couldn't git clost enough to the ears to do any bitin', which was a lucky thing fur their owner. Yes, an' it was a lucky thing fur me, too, fur if I *had* bit her ears off I probably would 'a' landed up in jail, a disgrace to my callin'."

"And then what?" I prompted, curious to know how the crazy story was going to end up.

"Well, in walkin' down the street behind the fat lady, hungerin' fur a taste of her ears, I suddenly noticed a sign in a house window. It read, Purfessor Biddypass, Hypnotist. An'

right away I saw a way out of my difficulty. I would have the cannibal toe put to sleep, then I wouldn't go 'round with my tongue waterin' at sight of fat ladies' ears, but would enjoy my beefsteak an' gravy once ag'in like a man in my station should, a gentleman born, I might say, an' also a gentleman of the cloth."

"And what did the Professor do?"

"Havin' bin told my story in confidence, he put the black toe to sleep. It very prob'ly would stay asleep fur a year, he said. Still, as he hadn't had no experience in hypnotizin' cannibal toes, he couldn't guarantee his work fur a hul year. What I better do, he advised, was to pick out a place to live on some lonely island where I would be all by myself, then if the toe *did* suddenly wake up, an' I got a hankerin' fur some raw flesh, I wouldn't be able to do nobody any harm, but could fill up on rabbits an' squirrels.

"So that is why I come here. Givin' up my circus missionary duties, I got myself a job with The New Jerusalem Bible Company as District Distributor, that bein' work in my line. At first I was troubled that I'd wake up some mornin' an' find my black toe awake, too. So I kept in close touch with Professor Biddypass, feelin' that I might need him. A month passed, then two

months, an' to my great joy the toe was still sound asleep. I couldn't move it with its muscles no mor'n I could move that oil stove over there by jest settin' here an' lookin' at it. So, in time, I quit worryin'. Still, I didn't lose track of the Purfessor, fur I knowed I'd need him at the end of the year. He had told me so. A week ago I noticed a dif'rent feelin' in the toe. A sort of itchin'. I couldn't wriggle it, but in the itchin' I could tell that it was gittin' ready to wake up. So I got word to the Purfessor right away, an' he wrote back that he'd be here the latter part of this week or the early part of next week. If the toe woke up before he got here, an' they was people near by, I had best have somebody I could trust tie me to a chair, he said.

"Yesterday in Steam Corners I could feel the toe itchin' more an' more. So I got out of town as quick as I could, paddlin' home in my canoe. Landin' on my island in the dark, I heerd voices —boys' voices. I went down the south shore, an' there was a boys' camp. That made me sweat. How awful it would be, I thought, if my toe should wake clean up while these boys was on the island. I first thought of goin' to them to warn them of their danger. Yet, I didn't like to do that. Fur I didn't want it to git spread

'round the neighborhood 'bout me havin' a cannibal toe—me bein', in just pride, a gentleman born, as I say, an' also a gentleman of the cloth. Them kind of stories travels fast. An' with everybody knowin' 'bout my misfortune, I wouldn't git no more Bible business, fur everybody would be 'fraid to let me come near them. No, I says to myself on deeper thought, it wouldn't be good business fur me to tell the campers my true story. I'd have to find some other method of gittin' them safely away.

"How would it be, I then considered, to take one of the boys into my confidence, bindin' him to secrecy? With a boy to help me, I could, if necessary, be tied to a chair as the Purfessor has said. I liked that plan. But how was I goin' to know which of the boys to pick out? I had to have a smart, trustworthy boy, fur if I picked out a dumb one he'd be 'fraid of me. Comin' to my cave, ponderin' the matter, I heerd some of the boys talkin' 'bout another boy named Jerry Todd. 'Jerry Todd,' says I to myself, considerin'. 'Um. . . . Jerry Todd.' I kept repeatin' the name over an' over. It made a deep impression on me. Names do that, you know. Take 'Edison.' When you hear *that* name you think of a great inventor. Every

time. 'Ford.' *That* name makes you think of a big automobile manufacturer. 'Jerry Todd.' That, I told myself in satisfaction, was the name of a smart boy—jest the kind of a boy I needed to help me. An' how tickled I was to later on find you under my bed you kain't imagine."

I wanted to say, "Apple-sauce," but I kept shut.

"An' that, Jerry, is the hul of my story. Now you know all 'bout me. You know my secret, which you've promised to keep. An' bein' a fair-an'-square boy, an' one with a sensible, smart head, I have the feelin' that you're goin' to stay here an' help me, as I've ast you to do. Between us we kin git rid of the other boys, to their safety, or anyone else on the island, an' then we'll git the honey out of the bee tree, me an' you, only the honey is goin' to be your'n to keep, every bit of it. An' in return all you've got to do is to stay here with me as my respected guest, with ropes handy to tie me in case that becomes necessary. They hain't no danger to you, as you kin sensibly see. An' you git the honey, which will be fifty-sixty dollars in your pocket. This is Friday. Mebbe the Purfessor will git here tomorrow. Anyway, you won't have to stay here more'n three or four days at the most. An',

as I say, fur doin' this act of kindness to a pore ol' man in trouble—an' I know you *want* to do it, you bein' a kind-hearted boy, as your face tells me—you git *all* the honey. Kin I depend on you, Jerry?"

I had acted kind of smart during the early part of the story, yet I hadn't missed a word of it, though if you have any idea that I believed the crazy mess you had better back up. It was a made-up story. I knew that. There probably was something queer about the one black toe, but it wasn't a cannibal's toe, as I had been told.

Was the old man trying to goofle me? That must be it. Certainly, he wasn't crazy. But what could be his idea, I wondered, in telling me this mess of stuff? And him a preacher! He had me puzzled. Did he suspect that I had seen him counting his money? And was it his scheme, in asking me to stay here, to thus keep me away from my chums, so that I couldn't peddle his secret?—or tell about the whispering voice?

One thing sure, he had no evil intentions against me. For if he had wanted to make a prisoner of me he could have done it easily enough when I was asleep. Yet he hadn't lifted a finger to harm me. To the contrary, he had been good to me. So I wasn't afraid of him.

Should I stay? Scoop and Red had run off and left me. The Strickers were banded against me. I couldn't get the honey alone. Yet if I stayed in the cave with the old man, as he wanted me to do, the honey would be mine.

Oh, boy! Wouldn't it be the gravy to win out over the Strickers, and, to that point, over my cowardly chums, as well! Moreover, how I could strut when I got home if I solved the mystery of the stone wall. As a matter of fact, I didn't want to leave the island until I *had* seen behind the new wall, though I was doubtful now that there was any connection between the wall and the vanished lizard.

I decided to stay. For I had everything to gain by doing so and nothing to lose. Getting my promise, the old man was awfully pleased. I was a kind-hearted boy, he said feelingly. Leaning on me in his great joy, he dropped big tears down my neck.

CHAPTER XII

IN STEAM CORNERS

As our plans required secrecy, I had best keep out of sight, the old man told me. So I didn't leave the cave that morning. And to keep me busy, he gave me the job of checking over newspapers.

I had wondered at his big wad of newspapers. They were scattered everywhere. And now he showed me how to go through these in search of death notices. Wherever I saw a notice of a man's death, I was told to write down the name and address, together with the name of the dead man's wife. In case there was no wife, I was instructed to skip the name.

This was a queer job, I thought. I couldn't see any sense in it. But I did as I was told, thus learning that the newspapers were mostly from neighboring towns—small places like Steam Corners, Hoopland and Grangeville. Among the newspapers were recent copies of the *Ashton Times* and the *Tutter Daily Globe,* so, on top of

my work, I had the fun of getting the latest news from home.

The *Tutter Daily Globe* has an "As-You-Were" section. And here I found a notice of the death of Mr. Theodore Tiff. They told about his death ten years after it happened, because, as President of the Illinois Bee-Keepers' Association, he was considered to be quite a prominent man. Just for the fun of it I put this name down in my list. Also I wrote down Mrs. Tiff's name, which I remembered was Amanda.

I had fourteen names in all. Taking this list, the old man brought out his typewriter and cranked it up. He made a queer picture as he bent over the keyboard, pecking at the keys with his two forefingers. What is it Dad calls that kind of typing? Oh, yes—the Hunt and Hit system. I wondered who he was writing letters to. But he was too busy to answer me when I tried to quizz him, though, to that point, I had the hunch that he didn't want to answer me.

Several times during my morning's work I gave a curious eye to the tall cupboard, as it guarded the mysterious stone wall, wondering, if given the chance, if I would have the nerve to tear the wall down alone. And what if I did tear it down?—what would I see? Something alive?

More probably, I concluded, something *dead,* for how could anything be *alive* in a tomb like that? Still, there was the whispering. That suggested life.

To one point, it would seem that the mysterious whispering hitched up with the darkness. For now that it was daylight everything was silent behind the stone wall. But though I thought of ghosts I tried hard to put that idea out of my head. *Ghosts?* There was no such thing, I told myself. Still, was the uneasy thought, if the whisperer *wasn't* a ghost, why did it do its stuff only in the darkness?

The oil stove came in for some curious attention, too. And in sort of coupling up the hidden money with the new wall, I wondered, in growing excitement, if some treasure, too big for the money box, had been sealed up here. But, no, came the more sensible and less exciting thought, that couldn't be the case. For a treasure couldn't *whisper.*

I don't know what your thoughts are just now, but in my own mind I had quit putting the caveman and the lizard hunter side by side, though earlier, as I have written down, I had coupled them up together in suspected trickery. Each had his own secrets, one a "vanished" lizard,

and the other a mysterious stone wall. But the secrets weren't connected.

Yet, on the heels of this conclusion, something happened that morning which convinced me that the caveman knew more about the missing lizard than he had let on to me. Fooling around with my newspapers, I had made a "glider." But instead of "gliding," my paper contraption scooted across the sandy floor with a queer grating sound. The caveman hadn't seen it coming. But he heard it! And when it struck his foot he let out a screech that almost lifted the cave roof. A scareder, whiter man I never hope to see in all my life.

"I—I thought it was the lizard," he panted, when his breath came back.

This was proof enough to me that he had *seen* the lizard, and thus knew how hideous and dangerous it really was. For otherwise he wouldn't have been so scared at the thought that it was in the cave. Yet, I puzzled, if he had seen it, why was he keeping secret about it?

Well, it came noon and we had dinner together. Then the old man busied himself wrapping up and addressing Bibles, one to a package. At three o'clock he stepped outside of the cave. But I had the hunch that he was watching through

the vine screen to see what I would do when left alone. So I didn't go near the hidden money. Instead, I threw myself on the bed.

"Oh, oh!" I groaned, acting as though I were dying with the collywabbles. "Oh, oh!" And just as I had expected, he popped into the cave as quick as scat.

"Why! . . . What's the matter, Jerry? Be you sick?"

"Too much dinner, I guess. But I feel better now."

"I kin give you a dose of castor ile," he offered.

"No, thanks."

"Well, you lay there until I git back. An' prob'ly by that time you'll be all right ag'in."

This time he went out of sight up the ledge path, for I poked my nose through the vine screen to see.

"It's still there," he told me, on his return.

"What?" I asked.

"The iron kittle."

"What iron kettle?"

"The one that we're goin' to put your honey in."

"You never told *me* anything about an iron kettle."

"Ever since I made that promise to help you git the honey," he explained, "I've been wonderin' what we were goin' to put it in. Fur, as you kin see, I haven't anything here any bigger 'an a pail. Then I remembered 'bout an ol' iron kittle that I had seed on the south shore, half buried in the sand. One of them kind of kittles that people used to make soft soap in. If it wasn't cracked, I told myself, it would be jest the thing we needed. An' I'm glad to report now, havin' seen it closer, that it's as sound as the day it was made—only, of course, it'll need a lot of cleanin' before we kin use it."

I learned afterwards that the iron kettle, of which he was speaking, had been lugged to the island by Ashton boys to boil maple syrup in, there being a number of big maple trees on the south shore.

"A kettle won't hold very much," I told him, little realizing how big it was.

"Oh! . . . This is a *big* kittle, Jerry. Awful big. Why, without wantin' to stretch the truth, which I wouldn't do, anyway, me bein' a gentleman of the cloth, as I say, I fully believe you could git into it *yourself*."

"Did you see anything of the Strickers?" I then inquired.

"Yes," he nodded slowly. "An' I've jest bin wonderin' how we're goin' to git rid of them. Fur that job must come ahead of the honey business."

"You could scare the wits out of them," I laughed, "if you dressed up like a ghost. For they think the island is haunted, anyway. And with a ghost doing its stuff, they'd clear out of here in a jiffy."

"Um. . ." he considered.

"Let's do it to-night," I urged eagerly.

Sweet baby! What fun it would be, I thought, to see the Strickers scoot. And scoot they sure would if a "ghost" took after them. For I knew how cowardly they were. Of course, a boy-sized ghost might have aroused their suspicions. But a full-grown ghost would fool them completely.

Gathering up his packaged Bibles and letters, the caveman started for the door, motioning for me to follow him.

"Where are we going?" I asked him in surprise.

"Up the canal to Steam Corners."

"But won't the Strickers see us?"

"Not if we leave right away, an' do it quick. Fur they were all in their camp a few minutes ago."

Hurrying out of the cave, he stopped to see that the vines hung properly over the door, then quickly led the way down the ledge path.

"This trip to Steam Corners is a case of necessity," he told me. "Fur I've got to see if they's a letter there from Purfessor Biddypass. Besides, these Bibles is got to be mailed. That's important."

There had been some mention of a canoe in his long story, and now I was shown the shallow cave at the water's edge where he kept his light craft, as cleverly hidden behind trailing vines as was his home, higher up in the ravine.

I asked to do the paddling, for that's a boy's game, and getting permission I took my place in the back seat. To better escape the Stricker's eyes, I paddled straight east to the mainland, then south, along the bushy shore. Turning east again, into the canal, I dipped the paddle in fancy strokes until we came to the Steam Corners lock, where we lugged the canoe around the lock to the higher water level. So close to Peg, I wanted to stop and find out how he was, but the old man grumbled over the delay. He was in a hurry to get to town, he said, for he wanted his mail to go out on the five o'clock train. So we went on. Anyway, I told myself, I could stop

on the way back. And that was just as well.

Coming within sight to town, around four-thirty, I was given the letters and Bibles, with instructions to take the mail to the post office and see that it was properly stamped.

"I'll wait for you here," the old man told me, giving as an excuse for not going into town that he was afraid that his "hypnotized" toe would start to acting up. "Here's a two-dollar bill fur the postage. An' you kin take a nickel out of the change an' buy yourself some candy. But don't you go spendin' no more'n a nickel," came sharply. "An' don't you go an' furgit to bring me the mail in box thirty-three, nuther. Jest tell the postmaster that you're gittin' the mail fur me an' he'll hand it to you through the windy."

Tucking the letters and the two-dollar bill into my pants pocket, I then divided up the Bibles, carrying seven under each arm, and started off. At the first turn in the road, though, I curiously got the letters out of my pocket, finding, to my amazement, that they were all addressed to *dead men.* Can you imagine that! There even was one for Mr. Theodore Tiff, who had been dead for ten years. Looking at the wrapped-up Bibles, I found that they, too, were addressed to the same dead men.

What crazy mess was this? Was the old preacher completely and hopelessly "cuckoo"? He must be, was my conclusion, to write letters to dead men! And this, then, was the "explanation" of his "hypnotized-toe" story! Instead of working to some kind of a hidden scheme, as I had suspected, he was just plain "cuckoo." It was disappointing. For it upset my plans. However, though I'd have to keep away from him now, I'd see that he got his mail, as I had promised, after which I'd frame up some kind of a vanishing scheme.

He had told me that I could spend five cents out of the two dollars. So I stopped in a grocery store to buy some candy. And while I was waiting in front of the showcase where the candy was kept, who should I hear farther back in the store but Mrs. Tiff, herself! Rubbering, I saw that she was showing off some samples of her strained honey, which reminded me that she frequently went out of town on business trips such as this.

"I understand," laughed the proprietor, who evidently knew the bee woman quite well, "that you've got a big mystery over in your town."

"How so?" said Mrs. Tiff, closing the honey jar that the grocer had opened.

"Accordin' to the county newspaper, you've lost a valuable lizard over there."

"Yes," came shortly.

"I remember that old geezer," the grocer went on. "I was at the depot gittin' some cheese the day he blew in. An' when I heerd that he was headin' for Oak Island to hunt *lizards*—well, I swan, Miz Tiff, I thought I'd bust. *Lizards!* If he wanted to hunt somethin', why didn't he hunt gophers, says I, or even grasshoppers. Anything but *lizards!* Cuckoo, Miz Tiff. That's what *he* is, accordin' to my notion. 'Absolutely cuckoo."

Br-r-r-r! When the bee woman spoke I thought I'd freeze, so cold and frosty was her voice.

"It may surprise you to know," she told the merchant, "that Professor Hebberloom Clatterby, of whom you are speaking, is my uncle."

At this news, the grocer sort of came to the top of the water and gulped for air.

"Your uncle? You don't say so! Waal, now that I recall, he *was* an uncommon smart-lookin' man. Kind of distinguished lookin', I'd say."

The human ice cake began to thaw out.

"Uncle Hebberloom is a trifle odd in some of his words and actions," came the admission. "But that is nothing. For all great men are that

way. Take Mark Twain. I understand that *he* couldn't write a line unless he was in bed."

"Exactly; exactly. An' the lizard hain't been found, you say?"

"Not yet. But we have reasons to believe that some Tutter boys hid it on Oak Island. So he has gone there to try and recover it. . . Let me see, did you say twenty-four full quarts, Mr. Bogwell? Or do you want part of it in pints?"

The fat bee woman and I came together at the front door, where she had a hard time wedging through.

"Well!" she stared, sort of surprised into speech. "Where did *you* come from?"

"Oak Island," I grinned, chewing on a gumdrop.

A worried look flashed into her fat face.

"Has anything happened to Uncle Hebberloom?" she inquired quickly.

Much less than having brought word from him, I hadn't even seen him, I told her.

"But he's there," I added quickly, as the worried look deepened in her face. "For your friend with the sleeping toe saw him."

"My friend with the sleeping toe?" she repeated, looking more puzzled now than worried. "Who do you mean?"

"The Rev. Joshua Jonathan Jacobs," I recited in full length. "I figured that he must be your friend," I joked, "for here's a letter he wrote you."

"Why!" she cried, looking at the letter. "This isn't for *me*. It's addressed to my dead husband."

"You might just as well take it," I told her. "For if I drop it in the letter box at the post office you're bound to get it anyway. And even if the old man *is* cuckoo, we might just as well save him the two cents."

The grocer having slopped honey on the outside of the sample jar, her hands were too sticky, she said, to open the letter. So I got it out of the envelope and read it for her. Here it is:

THE NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE COMPANY
Philadelphia, Penna.
REV. JOSHUA JONATHAN JACOBS, DISTRICT DISTRIBUTOR,
P.O. Box 33, Steam Corners, Ill.

Mr. Theodore Tiff,
Tutter, Ill.

Dear Mr. Tiff:

It is with a great deal of pleasure that we learn of your kindly desire to procure for your beloved

wife, Amanda, one of our choicest Bibles. And in line with your special request, we have taken great pains to select for Mrs. Tiff an absolutely perfect copy of our famous large self-pronouncing Bourgeois type edition, with overlapping covers of grained morocco, which selected copy is being mailed to you under separate cover.

The gift of a Bible between a loving husband and gentle wife, as in your case, is always a matter calling forth deep emotion. And how doubly precious is the gift, later on, when one or other of the loving faithful pair has been called Home!

We are glad, Mr. Tiff, that you asked us to select for your dear wife, not one of our cheaper Bibles, nor, again, one of our moderately priced Bibles, but one of our very best ones. It is pleasing to us to know that you are the kind of a husband who wants his deserving wife to have the best, within the limits of his pocketbook.

Mrs. Tiff, we know, will cherish this splendid gift of yours throughout her lifetime. Her wedding ring itself will be scarcely less dear or significant to her.

We shall be glad to receive your check or money order in prompt payment for the ordered Bible in the amount of $10.50. Your anticipated remittance should be made out to our District Distributor, Rev. Joshua Jonathan Jacobs, P. O. Box 33, Steam Corners, Ill.

And thanking you for giving us this pleasing privilege of being of service to you, we are,

Respectfully,

THE NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE COMPANY.

Mrs. Tiff blew up at the end of the amazing letter.

"I suppose," she jabbed me with her angry eyes, "that *this* is some more of your trickery. Not satisfied with having virtually stolen my uncle's lizard, you're now trying to work me for ten dollars and fifty cents. I'm surprised at you, Jerry Todd. For your father and mother are nice people."

"*Good* night!" I squeaked. "Don't blame *me.*"

"And what's in those packages?—Bibles?"

I nodded dizzily.

"There's one for you," I told her.

"I don't want it. And, to that point, if there *is* such a person as the Rev. Joshua Jonathan Jacobs, you can tell him for me that I may not be as bright as some, still I'm not *quite* simple enough to fall for this despicable skin-game of his."

Skin-game! She had hit the nail on the head, all right. This Bible agency of the Rev. Joshua's was a skin-game, and nothing else but.

I staggered to a doorway and sat down, equal piles of Bibles on each side of me. Of all the old frauds and hypocrites! Stealing pennies from dead baby's eyes was a quiet drop-the-handkerchief game as compared to this tricky mess of cheating weeping widows.

I thought of Mother. Dad is the world and all to her. And suppose, for example, that he should die. About the time of the funeral, along would come one of these smooth letters and a Bible. Having other Bibles, would she send this one back? Not so you could notice it! She'd grab it and kiss it, hugging it to her heart. Dad's last remembrance! Oh, precious, precious gift! Just as he had been kind to her in his lifetime, it would seem that his thoughtful kindness was to keep on after his death. And thus the human leech in the cave would have another ten dollars and fifty cents to put away in his money box.

Crazy? I had thought so, but I didn't think so now. Wasn't I the chump, I thought, to have let him feed me that taffy about his "cannibal toe." And how nicely I had swallowed the further goof about him being "a gentleman of the cloth." An old shyster!—that's what *he* was. A lying old shyster. There wasn't a word of truth in his story. Suspicious that I had seen his hidden money, he had told me the story to keep me near him, so that I couldn't rob him on the sly or spill his secret to my chums.

And to think I had let him weep on my shoulder! Gr-r-r-r! If only I could take him

and wring his confounded neck. The old fraud.

The thing to do, I realized, was to turn him over to the Steam Corners marshal. But before calling on the arm of the law to do the usual handcuff stuff, I decided to have a talk with the postmaster. For this looked to me like a case of using the mails to defraud, or whatever you call it, and possibly the postmaster would want to handle the matter himself.

But I was unable to find my man in his office. Nor could the girl at the window, who gave me the mail in box thirty-three, tell me where he was. Cramming the newspapers and other stuff into my different pants pockets, I then ran down the street to the police station.

An hour later we had old thing-a-ma-bob locked up in the Steam Corners jail. And maybe you think he didn't do some tall screeching and clawing in his arrest. Boy, what he threatened to do to me! Nothing short of sudden death. But with the marshal on my side, I wasn't afraid.

In the excitement of the arrest I forgot all about the mail in my pockets. Nor did I think about it until I was halfway back to the lock. resting my paddle, I tore open the envelopes. Five of them had money orders, each for ten dollars and fifty cents. Six others had checks. Still

another had a ten-dollar bill and fifty cents in two-cent stamps.

I added up. One hundred and twenty-six dollars. And all in one day! No wonder the hidden money box was crammed full, I thought, my heart jumping with excitement. This was *some* money-making scheme, all right.

Then I caught my breath. The marshal had told me that I could use the stuff in the cave just as though it was my own. So for the present the money, of which I had forgotten to tell him, was mine, as well as the bed and other truck.

I was crazy to get back to the cave. For I wanted to count my hidden fortune. And I wanted to find out, too, what was behind the stone wall.

Jerry Todd, millionaire! Jerry Todd, millionaire! Jerry Todd, millionaire! That is what the paddle sang to me as I dipped it in deep, swift strokes.

Then came another thought that knocked me cold. What if the Strickers found the hidden money before I got there?

Boy, did I ever make that canoe shoot through the water!

CHAPTER XIII

THE HIDDEN FORTUNE

THE sun was fast sliding down hill in the west. I figured that it was between six and seven o'clock. By the time I got to the island it would be dark. But I was rather glad of that than otherwise. For not wanting the Strickers to get their eyes on me, it would be easier to dodge them in the darkness. And if they *had* found the hidden fortune, I could work better in the darkness to recover it.

Coming to the Steam Corners lock, I got my canoe out of the water, lugging it around the lock to the lower water level. This was hard work. But I got away with it, all right, for I'm pretty husky. And what was a little sweat!

Crazy as I was to get back to the island, I decided to take an extra minute or two and inquire about Peg, for I was anxious to find out how he was getting along. But on my way to the lock tender's house I was suddenly stopped by a familiar voice.

"Hi," grinned Red Meyers, popping up in front of me out of a gooseberry bush.

Surprised, all I could do for a minute or two was to stare at him. Nor did I find myself particularly pleased at the unexpected meeting.

"Where did *you* come from?" I finally grunted.

"Me?" came the further happy grin. "Oh, Scoop sent me here to find out about Peg."

"But I thought you and Scoop had gone home."

He laughed at that.

"Who told you so?—the Strickers?"

"I overheard them talking about it."

"We fooled them slick, Jerry," he laughed again. "It was Scoop's scheme."

"It made me sore," I admitted, "to think that you had left me in the lurch."

"What! *Us* do a trick like that with an old pal? Hardly. But with so many against us, we had to leave the island. So why not make the enemy think that we had cleaned out for home, Scoop said. That would give us a better chance to turn the tables on them later on."

"And where are you and Scoop hanging out?"

"In a new camp down the canal."

In our further talk I learned from Red, who had just come from the lock tender's house, that

Peg was still in bed. No one, I was told, was allowed inside of the sick room except the family and the doctor.

"Poor Peg," I said, looking down the path toward the house that had played such an important part in our other Oak Island adventure. "I hope he gets well."

"*Him?* Say, he's too tough to let a little thing like scarlet fever get the best of him. Anyway, from what they told me about him coaxing for pie and pancakes, I guess he's a long ways from being an angel."

I then gave a picked account of my own adventures, starting from the time when I had become separated from my two escaping chums. And maybe you think Red's eyes didn't pop out when he heard about the whispering voice.

"*Good* night!" came his familiar exclamation. "I'm glad it was you instead of me. Say, I would have died."

"It was plenty spooky enough," I shrugged.

"And you think there's something hidden behind the stone wall?"

"There must be. For the closer I got to the wall the plainer I could hear the whispering."

"Jerry," came earnestly, "you and Scoop laugh at me when I talk about ghosts. But I

know people a whole lot older and smarter than either of you fellows who believe in ghosts. And I bet a cookie that *this* is real ghost stuff."

"It sounded ghostly enough," I admitted.

"You say there wasn't any whispering today?"

"No."

"Just in the dark, huh?"

I nodded.

"That proves it," came triumphantly. "For ghosts always work in the dark."

"But listen, Red: You can't hold a ghost back with a stone wall."

"You think a ghost can go right through a wall, huh?"

"Absolutely."

"And didn't you see anything on your side of the wall?"

"No."

"Not even a speck of blue light, like you read about in ghost stories?"

"No."

"Just the same," the smaller one hung on, "I bet you it's a ghost."

"It'll be fun," I said, "to tear the wall down."

"Yes, if we do it in the *daytime.*"

"And why not at night?" I grinned.

"Ex-cuse me."

"Well, we'll see what Scoop says."

That switched the freckled one's thoughts.

"Scoop has been worried sick over you, Jerry. When you didn't show up, we thought, of course, that the Strickers had caught you. But in creeping back to their camp, we couldn't see anything of you."

"Did you know," I then inquired, "that Professor Clatterby is on the island?"

"Sure thing," came the quick grin. "But how did *you* find out about it?"

"The caveman told me."

"We saw him and talked with him," Red went on. "The poor old geezer! He was half starved when we found him. And you should have seen his feet! All cut and bleeding from going around barefooted. Scoop doctored him up and helped him find his shoes."

"Were they lost?"

"He said so. But we found them right where he had taken them off! His socks, too."

Following me into the canoe, Red worked his tongue while I was working the paddle. But though he was tickled pink in having found me, as his lively gab suggested, I'll have to admit, though to my discredit, that I wasn't tickled pink

in having met him. For, as I have written down, I had figured on getting all the honey and all of the money. And now, of course, I would have to divvy up with my two pals.

But I'm not naturally a piggy kid. I usually enjoy sharing my stuff with my intimate chums. So it wasn't very long before I was thoroughly ashamed of myself. And wanting to do the right thing, I brought out the wad of checks and money orders, telling old freckled nose about the hidden money in the cave. Boy, was he ever excited! I thought he'd fall out of the canoe.

"Wait till Scoop hears about this," he yipped. "Oh, baby!"

Pretty soon we came to a place where a small creek spilled itself into the canal at the right-hand shore. But I didn't know that the creek was there until Red told me, for the bushes hid it completely. Back of the bushes, which we had to pull aside in order to make room for the canoe, I saw the tub raft. And farther back, on a grassy, shaded knoll, our tent was pitched.

Scoop came on the gallop, so tickled to see me that he almost hugged me.

"Jerry's found a million dollars," Red cried the first thing.

"So's your old man," laughed the leader.

Then, noticing the canoe, he asked me curiously where I had gotten it.

"It's a part of his fortune," the gabby one ran on. "Didn't I just tell you?"

Scoop, of course, thought that Red was talking through his hat.

"What's the matter with little fuzzy-top, Jerry? Has he been chewing loco weeds?"

I laughed.

"You'll think that I'm the one who has been chewing loco weeds when you hear my crazy story."

"He's been living in a cave," was Red's further contribution.

Scoop's eyes jumped to mine.

"Did you see the Bible peddler, Jerry?"

"*Did* I? I've been his house guest since last night, I want you to know. And chief toe watcher, too. Some class to me, huh?" I strutted around in fun.

The leader almost laughed himself dizzy at the story of the "sleeping toe."

"Oh, Jerry! I wish I could have seen you when you crawled out of your hole. And you say the old geezer's locked up in the Steam Corner's jail?"

I told the complete story of the exciting arrest.

"*Some* skin-game!" was Scoop's further comment.

"Tell him what the marshal told you about the money, Jerry."

"The money really wasn't mentioned," I admitted, "for in the excitement I forgot all about it. But in asking him about the stuff in the cave, he said I could use it just as though I owned it——"

"Just as thought *we* owned it," Red corrected, looking out for himself.

"And the money, of course, is a part of the cave stuff. So I guess it's ours, all right."

"Absolutely," said Red.

With the job of finding me, the leader had picked out this hidden camp site as a convenient place from which to make occasional searching trips to the nearby island. But now that I didn't have to be "rescued," the suggestion was made that we abandon the creek camp and go to the island to live. Certainly, if the old Bible peddler could live there without the Strickers getting wise to the hidden cave, we could, Scoop said. And how easy for us then to secretly search the island for the bee tree!

"But Jerry thinks," Red spoke up for me, "that we may find the Strickers there ahead of us."

"Them?" Scoop turned up his nose. "Say, Bid and his gang haven't got brains enough to remember that there's a cave on the island. And even if they did find it, which isn't likely, the money's hid."

Well, we ate supper, sort of gobbling the food down in a hurry. And between bites the leader told me the complete story of his accidental meeting with the old lizard hunter.

"I ran into him in our camp when we were getting ready to skin out. And when I saw who it was, say, you could have knocked me over with a feather."

"Me, too," chimed in Red, like the cow's tail.

"The poor old geezer! He was as lank as a starving bedbug, Jerry. So we fed him. And the way he *ate!*"

"Red tells me his feet were on the bum."

"I wish you could have seen them! Landing on the island ahead of us, and hiding his rowboat, he then had lost his shoes. So you can imagine what his bare feet were like, walking around among those rocks! But I fixed him up in pretty good shape with our first-aid kit. Then Red and I helped him find his shoes and boat. "Yes," came the laugh, as the speaker read the question in my face, "he even thought *that* was lost, too. Can you *imagine!*"

"His memory," said Red, "is about as long as a katydid's shoestring."

"Well, when he told us his story, we saw right off that we had been wrong about the fellow in the hidden cave. The two men weren't working together at all. I was crazy to find you, to tell you the truth. And, bu-lieve me, old timer, when we couldn't find you, we sure were worried."

"I was a dumb-bell," I admitted, "to hide in the cave. Still," I added, thinking of the hidden money, "I'm glad now that I did it."

"It was your telephone talk with Peg that brought the Professor here. Maybe you don't remember it, but you ended up by saying some things about the missing lizard that again aroused his suspicions. That is why he looked daggers at you. And in coming here, it was his scheme to spy on us, thinking that sooner or later we'd lead him to the lizard's hiding place. I made him understand that we were innocent. And then Red and I started him for home in his rowboat. Gee! We felt sorry for him, Jerry. He sure was crushed. And to cheer him up we told him that if the lizard *was* on the island—which, of course, is just a silly notion of his—we'd surely capture it and bring it home with us."

"I tell Jerry," Red put in here, "that the whispering is ghost stuff."

That brought a laugh of ridicule from the leader.

"Ghost stuff! Aren't you ever going to grow up, kid?"

"Huh! You can rub it in all you want to, but that doesn't change my opinion a bit. And you may find out, mister smarty, that I know as much as you do."

"Well," laughed Scoop, "we won't be much longer left in doubt. For as soon as we get back to the cave we'll tear the wall down."

"Not *to-night,*" said Red, looking scared.

"Nothing else but."

"A moment ago when you were talking about the lizard," I spoke up, "you said that you didn't believe it was on the island. But I do. For I have reason to believe that the caveman saw it there."

To explain what I meant, I told the others about the paper "glider" that I had made in the cave, and its effect on the Bible peddler when he had heard it scooting across the floor at him.

"Which proves," laughed Scoop, "that it isn't the lizard that's walled up, anyway."

Supper over, we loaded our canoe with stuff that we would be likely to need in the next day or two. Then we set out in the deepening twi-

light, hopeful that the enemy wouldn't come snooping into the creek in our absence to thus discover our tent and tub raft.

Pretty soon we came to the big wide waters. Here we kept to the right, following the bushy shore. It was dark now, but not so dark that we couldn't see things. Finally we came to the island's north shore. And finding the canoe's hiding place, we unloaded our stuff, after which we put the light craft away for the night. There was a big campfire across the island from us. We could hear singing and shouting. This led us to believe that the other gang was all there. But to play safe, we skulked along in the shadow of the trees and bushes. Each one had a part of the load. And it was a glad moment to all of us when we dropped our junk on the cave floor.

Lighting the lamp, I saw to my great joy that everything in the cave was exactly as the Bible peddler and I had left it. Yet I don't think that I felt quite *sure* about the money until we had taken the box out of its hiding place.

Say, we had enough jack to start a chain of banks like Mr. Woolworth's ten-cent stores. We grabbed the money out of the box by fistfulls—twenty-dollar bills, ten-dollar bills, five-dollar bills and *bushels* of silver dollars, half dollars and

quarters. The world was ours! We could buy it in one hunk if we wanted to, with the moon thrown in. We could make a frog pond of Lake Michigan and use Australia for a baseball diamond.

To get the money arranged so that we could count it, and thus find out how rich we really were, we spread it out on the bed, putting the twenty-dollar bills in one pile, the tens in another, and so on. Every coin was put into its proper pile, even down to the pennies. To keep track of the piles, we wrote everything down on paper. Here is the complete list:

One big pile of twenty-dollar bills	$1,800.00
One big pile of ten-dollar bills	990.00
One big pile of five-dollar bills	460.00
One small pile of two-dollar bills	20.00
One big pile of one-dollar bills	332.00
Two big piles of silver dollars	192.00
Three big piles of half dollars	126.00
Three big piles of quarters	42.00
One big pile of dimes	28.60
One big pile of nickels	16.85
One big pile of pennies	4.20
Total money	$4,011.65
Checks and money orders	360.40
Stamps	16.83
Everything put together	$4,388.88
Each one's share	1,462.96

CHAPTER XIV

THE CAVE'S SECRET

IMAGINE yourself walking around with $1,462.96 in your pockets! Boy, it gave us a big feeling! And just for the fun of it I put Scoop's $1,462.96 in my right pants pocket and Red's $1,462.96 in my left pocket. With my own $1,462.96 in my right hip pocket, where I usually carried my handkerchief, that gave me the whole works—$4,388.88.

It had taken us more than an hour to count and divide up the money. And as we had other work to do that night, as the leader now reminded, we stuffed our money into separate socks and then crammed the three socks into the money box, after which the box was again put away in its regular hiding place under the oil stove.

Fearful that the money might get away from us in some way or another, I wanted to take it outside and bury it, in much the same way that we had buried the bonds in my "Oak Island Treasure" story. But Scoop talked me down.

There was no safer hiding place than the hole under the oil-stove stand, he argued. But afterwards, let me tell you, he was blamed sorry for not following my advice. And to this day, whenever I want to shut him up on his bossy stuff, all I've got to do is to say "money box."

"And now to bed, huh?" said Red hopefully.

"And now to *work,*" corrected the leader, going over to the cupboard.

"*Good* night!" squeaked the smaller one. "I thought maybe you'd forgotten it."

Scoop took hold of one side of the cupboard.

"Give me a lift, Jerry."

"Maybe we better unload it," I suggested.

"Shucks! It isn't heavy. I can almost lift it alone."

"I hope it falls on both of you," glowered Red in the background.

But it didn't. And with the wall exposed, Scoop looked it over critically.

"How can we make it whisper?" he laughed.

"Why ask us?" Red further grouched. "You're the only one around here who knows anything."

"Shall we throw him out, Jerry?" the good-natured leader looked at me.

"Better not," I waggled. "For it may take all three of us to hold the ghost down."

"If anything comes out of that wall," said Red, "you'll see little me hoof it out of here so fast that you'll be able to balance a cup of water on my coat tail without spilling a drop."

Scoop took a hammer that lay on the floor and tapped the wall.

"Hollow," said he.

"Yah," said Red, "like your head."

"Tap harder," I grinned, "and maybe something will wake up."

"Hello!" said Scoop, tapping again, which gave Red a swell chance to show off some more of his smartness.

"There was a tap, tap, tap on the cottage door," he recited. "'Who is it?' said the old lady in the bed. 'Little Red Riding Hood,' said the naughty wolf. 'I have a toothpick and a pot of jello for you, grandma dear.' 'Very well,' said the happy old lady, 'you may lift the latch and come in, my child.'"

"Oh, for the love of mud!" exploded the leader, glaring at the entertainer. "You give me a pain."

"Suppose we wait awhile," I suggested. "Maybe the whisperer will come to life."

"Now you're talking," Red stepped around. "Let's wait till next Christmas."

"Say, Jerry," said Scoop, "how did the caveman act when he heard the whispering?"

"I couldn't see his face. But I *think* he was startled. For that is when he dropped the money box."

"Did he go over to the wall and listen?"

"He went to the cupboard."

"Like old Mother Hubbard," chimed in Red.

"Did he say anything?" Scoop followed up.

"No."

"Just stood there and listened, huh?"

I nodded.

"Queer," reflected the leader, "that the whispering should have startled or puzzled *him*. For if he built the wall, as we think, he certainly ought to know what's behind it."

"Maybe he was scared."

"I don't blame him," piped Red.

"But he had the what-you-may-call-it walled in," puzzled Scoop. "So why should he be scared?"

"Maybe he was afraid his wall wasn't strong enough."

"Every minute," suffered Red, "I can feel myself slipping faster and faster."

The moon having uncovered its round white face, it was almost as light as day outside of the cave. Across the island, the Strickers still were yipping and singing. And curious to learn if they were celebrating their discovery of the bee tree, we decided to crawl up on them, through the thicket, to listen to them, letting the wall wait for another hour or so. By that time the mysterious whisperer might be on the job again, Scoop said, which would make the work of tearing the wall down all the more exciting.

Of course, in our new riches we really didn't need the pin money that the wild honey would bring in. But money isn't everything. What we wanted quite as much as the honey was to win out over the enemy. We had set out to get the honey, and we intended to finish the job.

But in our secret trip to the enemy's camp we failed to find out any thing of importance. So far as we could learn the campfire celebration was just a lot of hilarious nonsense. And when we started back to the cave, an hour later, it was our contented belief that the enemy didn't know any more about the whereabouts of the bee tree than we did.

The wind had come up. And as it struck me in the face on the ledge path I was reminded of my previous night's flight down this same path,

following our escape from the enemy's camp.

"Who-o-o-o? Who-o-o-o?" Having come to the cave, we could hear the mysterious voice. And for a moment or two even Scoop and I were too scared to go inside.

"Sounds like an owl," whispered the leader.

"I thought so, too. But wait until you get closer to the wall."

Red draped himself on my right shoulder.

"Carry me home and bury me under the oleander," he expired.

We went inside then. And when the lamp was lit, Scoop carried it to the wall, where he listened attentively. Pretty soon he felt around on the wall. And then, as though he had done something with his fingers, the whispering stopped.

"What are you laughing at?" I asked him, when he sat the lamp down and let out a lot of yipping, "Haw! haw! haw!" stuff.

"You and your mysterious whisperer!" he roared.

"Tell me," I pulled at his arm.

"And Red thought it was a *ghost!* A *ghost,* mind you! Haw! haw! haw!"

"Isn't it?" the freckled one inquired, letting out his neck at the wall.

"It's the wind."

"The *wind?*" I repeated.

"There's a tiny hole in the wall. And when I put my finger over it the 'whispering' stopped. It isn't a whisper. It's a sort of *whistle.*"

He showed us the hole in the mortar. And sure enough we could feel the wind on our fingers.

"But where does it come from?" I cried, puzzled.

"That," said the leader, starting to pound on the wall with his hammer, "is exactly what we're going to find out."

Getting an axe, which I had noticed in the cave, I joined the other worker. We made a lot of noise. And fearful that one of the Strickers might accidentally happen along, we put Red on guard outside.

It took us more than thirty minutes to batter the wall down. And when our job was finished, what a mess we had made! But that was all right, Scoop said. We could easily clean it up.

What we found behind the wall was a natural cavern, which the caveman had tapped, either by accident or intention, in seeking to add another inner chamber to his underground home. But why he had closed up the opening, after all of his hard work, was a mystery to us.

That the cavern had an outside opening, we

could not doubt. For a draft of chilly air fanned our faces, which, of course, was the work of the wind.

"Who would have dreamed," said Scoop in a queer voice, as we rubbered into the spooky hole, shielding our lamp from the draft, "that there was a cavern like this on the island. Look at the size of it! Man, oh, man!"

CHAPTER XV

UNDERGROUND EXPLORATIONS

As I have written down, what we had found behind the stone wall, instead of something "alive," was a whopping big cave. So, as you can imagine, the disappointment that had jumped at me in learning that the mysterious "whispering" was just the frisky work of the wind—and even Red's similar disappointment in learning that the "whisperer" wasn't a gabby long-necked ghost!—was lost in the general excitement of this much more important discovery.

Boy, it sure was some cave, all right! Probably the biggest one in the country. Anyway, it was the newest. And how the people would talk about it when the news got spread around! We'd get our names in the newspapers, all right. And maybe we would be mentioned in the state history, too. Gee! Imagine that!—schoolboys studying books in which their own names had been printed, as discoverers of things important to the state!

Of course, the Bible peddler had been ahead of

us in the cavern, as his work proved. But that didn't make him its discoverer. To be a discoverer you've got to *tell* about your work. And he had done just the opposite. Yes, we were the real discoverers, all right. And thus having the right to give the new cavern a name, what name would better fit it, we thought, than Whispering Cave. Certainly, that was a better-sounding name than Todd Cave or even Ellery Cave.

Eager to do the exploring act, to find out just how big and wonderful our new cave really was, we quickly got our lights ready. Scoop and I had flashlights, that we had brought along as part of our camping stuff, and Red carried the hand lamp. Not knowing what we were heading into, and wanting to play safe on the light question, we also gave our pockets a liberal dose of matches. These would come in handy, we figured, in case the wind blew out the lamp. Also, in an emergency, we would be able to make paper torches of the newspapers that Scoop carried in a roll for that special purpose.

I know of nothing in the way of outdoor adventures that a boy can get a bigger kick out of than underground exploring, though it is true that in an adventure of this kind a fellow usually has the feeling that he's taking chances with his life.

For instance, a cave roof that has stiffly humped its back for thousands of years can very easily decide to flatten out on a second's notice. And how unlucky for the young explorers who happened to be there at that particular second! Besides, no animal of the right sort cares to live in almost constant darkness. Yet that is what you usually find, or expect to find, in a cave.

But the fun is there, nevertheless. Gold! Silver! Diamonds! All these precious things come out of the earth. And how exciting to think that just ahead of you a vein of virgin gold is waiting to be discovered! Diamond mines! Pillars of pure silver, which, when cut down, will bring in the price of a hundred automobiles! All these big thoughts are with a fellow when he goes out of the daylight into the secret depths of a new cave. About nine hundred and ninety-nine times out of a thousand all he ever discovers is a few old bones, showing where some animal kicked the bucket, but, as I say, the fun is there just the same.

"Everybody ready?" Scoop sang out.

"I am," I told him, eager to get started.

"Me, too," Red chimed in.

"All right. Here we go. But watch your step, fellows. For there may be drop-offs."

There was a difference of more than a foot between the floor level of the two caves, the old cave being the lowest. But the former worker, in connecting the two underground chambers, had, with great labor and patience, hewn the sandstone down to a slant. So it was easy for us, in getting started, to go from one cave to the other. Shooting our lights ahead of us as we cautiously advanced, we found that we were in what seemed to be a huge natural tunnel, the walls and ceiling of which, like the smaller cave, were formed of solid sandstone. Yet there was the difference here that the stone was dark with age. At places the walls were close together—I remember one tight place where we had to go sideways, with our back and stomach scraping—then, again, the tunnel widened out into chamber-like rooms. The roof, too, was high and low by turns, though at no point in our passage did it come down low enough to touch our heads.

We were going down hill now. At places the descent was so steep that we had to cling to the rocky wall to keep from slipping. Red was scared. We might not be able to get back, he said. And at one particularly slippery place, where the rocky floor was wet from overhead

drippings, he wouldn't go down until we showed him that we could climb up again.

The further down we went the wetter the walls got, with more and more water dripping from overhead. This water trickled down the stony passageway, forming a pool at one place. It was a case of stopping right there or wading the pool, so we waded, though you may be very sure that we carefully sounded the depths of the black-looking water before going ahead. Red clung to me, acting for all the world as though he expected some ancient monster to suddenly rise up out of the water and grab him. But, to that point, nothing bigger than a polliwog could have lived here in comfort, for at no place was the water above our ankles. And cold! Br-r-r-! It gave us the shivers.

"At the rate we're going down hill," said Scoop, "we ought to hit the canal level pretty quick."

"Maybe we'll find an underground lake," I said, "with blind fish in it, like in Mammoth Cave."

"Just so we don't find a lakeful of hungry alligators," shivered Red.

Swish! Something big and black flew over our heads. At sight of it the freckled one gave a

screech, and the lamp, dropping out of his hands, was broken into a million pieces.

"Well, if you aren't a lulu," jawed Scoop.

"What was it?" gurgled saucer eyes.

"An owl, of course."

"Gosh! I thought it was the devil, himself."

"Now that your light's gone, you'd better keep close to Jerry."

"Let's go back."

"Not until we've found the outlet."

"But how do you know there is an outlet?"

"The owl proves that. Besides, we can still feel the wind."

Rather than be without a light of his own, Red made some newspaper torches, which, with their flaring blaze, were a big help to all of us.

"Water!" I yipped, pointing ahead.

"It's your 'underground lake,' Jerry," cried Scoop, when we had come to the sandy shore of the big pool.

"Maybe it's a part of the canal."

"I imagine," came thoughtfully, "it's on a level with the canal. But there's stone walls all around us. See? So we know that the outlet isn't a water cave."

The chamber that we were in was bigger than the Tutter opera house and Red's barn put to-

gether. When we spoke, our voices made queer hollow echoes high above our heads. Just for the fun of it we all yelled together. And the crashing sound that the overhead rocky dome rolled back at us was like a double powder blast.

We thought at first that we were going to be stopped by the big pool, which practically filled the bottom of the cavern, but on closer search we found that we could circle the pool to the right on a narrow shelf-like ledge. Yet, in gingerly following this passageway, there was the constant fear that it would go down under our weight, thus pitching us headlong into the water. So, as you can imagine, we were glad when we struck the sandy shore again, almost directly across the chamber from the tunnel door.

"Look!" cried Red, making good use of his eyes. "Moonlight!"

Sure enough, we had come to the outlet that the leader had been hoping for. But to get to it we had to scramble up a loose sandy slope. Crawling on our hands and knees, we came out on a rocky shelf in one of the more easternly ravines.

"Why, I've seen this little cave a hundred times," said Scoop, getting his bearings. "But I thought it was just a hole under the rocks."

Having given the newly-discovered cavern a name, we now decided on Owl Pool as a good name for the underground lake. It was Scoop's belief that a submerged tunnel connected this lake with the canal. And stopping on our way back, he talked glowingly of the fun we could have some day searching for the tunnel. If it was short, we could dive through it, he said.

Were there fish in the pool? There must be, we concluded, if Scoop's tunnel really was there. Not blind fish, though, as I had mentioned, but bullheads, probably, and fish like that. What fun we could have with hooks and lines! It would be a new kind of fishing for us, and naturally, as boys always like new stunts, we were crazy to try it.

Well, taken all in all, the new cavern was a smashing big discovery. And we could imagine how the people in the neighborhood would flock here to see it when the news of its discovery got spread around. If only we could charge admission! Two bits for grown-ups and ten cents for kids. One of us could take in the money while the other two acted as guides. To do that, however, we'd have to get permission from the island's owner. And remembering who the

owner was, we realized how useless it was for us to consider any such scheme as that.

Our thoughts thus switched to the rich kid, it made us blue to think that the new cave really was his. If it earned any money, as a show place, the money would go into his pocket. All that we could hope to get out of it would be the honor of having discovered it.

On our way back to Bible Cave, which was the name that we had given to the old cave, we discovered several smaller side passages in the long tunnel. Maybe that was where the gold and silver was, we thought! But we decided not to explore the new passages to-night, for my flashlight was fast going dim. Besides, to do a good job of it we needed real torches.

Leading the way, Scoop suddenly stopped.

"What is it?" I asked quickly.

"I thought I saw something."

"Where?"

"Over there under that ledge."

We found that there was a hole under the ledge big enough for any one of us to crawl through.

"What was it?—a rat?"

"You'll say I'm crazy, but it looked to me like a small alligator."

"Maybe it was the big lizard!" I cried, in growing excitement.

"*Good* night!" shimmied Red. "Let's get out of here."

Scoop was at work with his flashlight.

"Look!" he cried. "Here's lizard tracks."

It was plain enough to us now why the caveman had built the wall. He had seen the lizard! And the wall was his protection.

Following his example, we stoned up the doorway. Then Scoop and I went around to the other ravine opening and did the same thing there. The big lizard thus shut up in the cave, its capture later on, in keeping with Scoop's promise to its owner, wouldn't be such a terribly hard job. Stuff like that is "pie" for a boy.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BEE TREE

We slept three in a bed until Red got to snoring like an old rusty buzz saw in the middle of the night, and then Scoop and I boosted him out in self-defense. Waking up in the new daylight, I found that my bed partner had gotten up ahead of me. And the good breakfast smells that now filled the cave! Um-yum! It made me think of the preceding morning.

But how different were my fortunes now! I had my chums with me; we had the hidden money; we had discovered a regular old gee-whacker of a cave; and the chances were that we'd win out over the Strickers in getting the wild honey. Everything seemingly was in our favor.

Scoop can make peachy flapjacks. When we go camping we always shove that job at him. But never had his cooking tasted so good to me as this morning. Having nicely murdered about forty or fifty of his frying-pan masterpieces,

sweetened with honey from old Joshua Jerusalem's cupboard stock, we tickled the dishes with warm water, in good housekeeping style, and then got ready for the day's work.

"Well, what's the first thing on the program?" I asked the leader, letting my belt out. "Lizard capturing or bee-tree searching?"

"There's no great hurry about capturing the lizard, Jerry."

"Then we're going to work outside, huh?"

"That's my idea. Certainly, we'll never find the bee tree if we don't buckle down and search for it."

"There isn't a tree on the island," yawned Red, like the lazy little wart that he was, "that I haven't already looked at twenty-six times. They've even gotten so they bow to me when they see me coming."

"Well," laughed Scoop, "I have a hunch that you're going to be luckier on your twenty-seventh trip."

"Maybe."

"What we want to do, as I see it," the leader got down to business, "is to keep our eyes peeled for bees and watch which direction they take. If we do that we'll soon know the general location of the bee tree. So the rest ought to be easy."

"And what do we do after we find the bee tree?" I joked. "Hide it on the Strickers?"

"We've got to get rid of them somehow."

"If only old Joshua were here," I laughed, remembering the scheme I had suggested to the caveman, "we could dress him up like a ghost. For you know how Biddy dear loves ghosts!"

"That's old stuff, Jerry," the other shook his head. "And if we were to try it we might get the worst of it. What we need is something *original.* But let's not talk about it now. For our other work is more important. Remember what I say about watching for bees. And be sure that you lay low on the Strickers, too. If you hear their voices, hide in the bushes until you're absolutely sure that you're safe from their eyes."

I had the east end of the island. As I have described, it is very rocky and hilly here. Young mountain stuff. Climbing around among the bowlders, I skinned seventeen shins, more or less. For it's no easy trick, let me tell you, sleuthing a flying bee and keeping track of your feet at the same time.

On the way back to the cave, disappointed over my poor work, yet thankful that I hadn't been jumped on and dragged off by the enemy, I stumbled upon a colony of hornets in a pocket of

the rocky hillside. If you are very well posted on hornets you probably know that some hornets are big and others are bigger. These were the especially big kind, full-grown, hungry-acting gladiators, every one of them. And *peppy!* Say, they fairly *steamed* like young locomotives. Their nests looked for all the world like footballs hung on end. Having had some "pointed" experience with hornets such as these, I skittered into the scenery at first sight of them. For I didn't want them to get the silly notion that I was trying to butt in on them. I guess not! Whenever I meet a hornet I always bow as respectful-like as you please, saying: "You can have the whole road to yourself, Mr. Hornet. I don't intend to crowd you at all. So step on the gas and zip along to suit yourself—only *please* don't zip at *me.*"

When I got back to the cave Scoop was setting the table for dinner.

"What luck?" he sang out.

"All I found," I told him gloomily, "was three hornets' nests."

The disappointment in his face showed that his success had been no better than my own.

"It's queer," said he, "that we can't find that bee tree."

"I saw lots of bees over on the west end of the island," Red spoke up, with his fingers in the sugar bowl, "but I couldn't tell whether they were coming or going."

"That was my trouble, too," waggled the leader.

Here an idea popped into my head.

"How would it be," I suggested, "if we put our honey outside of the cave where the bees could fill up on it? Wouldn't it be easier to follow them then? For certainly, as soon as they were loaded up, they'd light out for home."

Scoop gave a tickled yip.

"Jerry," he bragged on me, "that idea is worth a million dollars."

"All right," I grinned, holding out my hand in fun, "shove me the million."

"We'll pay you in honey," he laughed.

"Yah," said Red, "*if* we get it."

"*If* we get it, huh? Bu-lieve me, we're going to get it, and nothing else but. We can't possibly fail now. So let's gobble down our dinner and wind ourselves up for a busy afternoon."

Following our usual cautious plan of leaving the cave, we slipped out, one at a time. Nor did Red and I dare to venture into the ravine until we had gotten the leader's signal that the coast was

clear. For how unlucky for us to have the enemy happen along just as we were poking our heads through the vine screen!

Meeting together at the spring on the north shore, we put the honey dish in an open spot, where the bees would be sure to find it, after which we parked ourselves in the nearby bushes, hopeful that a busy little honey gatherer would soon trickle into sight.

"Hot dog!" buzzed our first visitor, skidding out of the sky into a sticky dish. Stuffing itself, and probably shedding tears over the fact that it couldn't hold ten times as much, it sailed away on high gear. After a few minutes another little honey guzzler came along and lapped up a few drops. It, too, struck out for the south. This happened six times in succession. So we knew that the bee tree, the general location of which had been a complete puzzle to us so far, was somewhere on the south shore.

And that, as you will remember, was where the Strickers had their tents pitched!

Turning ourselves into four-legged snakes, we thus wriggled through the grass and bushes until we came to the other side of the island. Here, within sight of the enemy's camp, we gave the bees another honey party. And as nearly as we

could determine they all headed straight for the grove where the tents were.

"The big boobs," said Scoop, watching the campers through the bushes. "They've looked all over the island for the bee tree, and here it is right in their front yard."

Looking the trees over, I picked out one with an unusually large trunk.

"I bet it's that big basswood," I pointed.

"I shouldn't wonder. For basswoods usually are hollow. And I can see dead branches, which is a pretty sure indication that there isn't an awful lot of life left in the tree."

Red knows how to use his eyes, as I say.

"I can see a hole under one of the dead limbs as big as my head," he told us.

Scoop chuckled.

"It must be a pretty big hole," he joked, "if it's as big as *your* head."

I had noticed the St. Louis kid fooling around under the bee tree. And now, in getting wise to his work, I suddenly clutched the leader's arm.

"Look!" I cried. "He's throwing a rope into the tree. Do you suppose he knows about the bees?"

"Lay low," said Scoop, "and we'll watch and find out."

Failing a dozen or more times, smarty finally got his rope over a limb. And then, sweating, he called to the others, who were loafing in the shade.

"Hey! I thought you kids wanted to build a tree house."

"It's too hot," said Hib Milden.

"Too hot, your granny. Come here and steady the rope for me if you want to see how we climb ropes down in St. Louis."

Red groaned, feeling, I guess, that everything was lost.

"Of all the rotten luck," said he, "that they should pick out *our* tree."

"It did look as though our luck had turned against us. Still, as the leader said, there was many a slip twixt the back door and the hen house. By using our heads, we might be able to win out yet, he declared.

Watching, we saw the rich kid climb the rope like a monkey. He was good at it, all right. But, as you can imagine, we had no praise for him in our minds.

"What do you know about this!" he suddenly yipped from his perch. "There's bees up here. I can see them going in a hole."

That, of course, woke up the whole camp.

"The bee tree! The bee tree!" yelled the smart alecks at the top of their voices, scooting here and there like a lot of crazy loons. And now that they were all in sight, I noticed that some of them had bathing suits on. I thought nothing much of it at the time. But later on—oh, baby! Could anything have been more wonderful!

Bid, of course, started slamming the orders around in his usual bossy style.

"Come on down," he told the St. Louis kid, "and we'll smoke 'em out. For we've got to do that to get the honey."

Lying beside me in the tall grass, Scoop gritted his teeth.

"It's our honey. For we discovered the tree ahead of them."

"Peg and us, both," I reminded.

"For two cents, Jerry," came with flashing eyes, "I'd suggest that we go over there and fight the whole gang."

That brought Red's head up.

"Hey! How do you get that way? If anybody happens to ask you, I didn't come here to get punched in the snout and kicked in the seat of the pants at the same time."

Well, we watched the camper's get out their

bee smoker and an auger. First they bored a hole in the tree trunk close to the ground. But the tree wasn't hollow that far down, so they tried their luck higher up, using a ladder that they had made. About ten feet from the ground the auger chewed air on the inside of the trunk. And that, of course, gave the workers something to yip about.

Firing up the bee smoker, they prodded its metal snout into the hole. Then they pumped the tree full of smoke. I suppose they thought that the bees, in getting a whiff of the smoke, would accommodatingly slop over in a faint. But these bees, let me tell you, weren't the fainting kind. Not so you could notice it! What they did, instead of fainting, was to boil out of their castle door a million strong. Yes, sir, I guess there were ten million of them. Maybe a hundred million. And were they *mad!*

The St. Louis kid was perched on the neck of wabbly ladder with the bee smoker. But he dropped the smoker in a jiffy, let me tell you, when the bees got out their swords and started cantering around the sky-line in search of human blood.

Boy, did I ever laugh! It was a scream. Especially when smarty upset the ladder on top of

Bid. A bee having gotten into the back of Hib Milden's bathing suit, the punctured one jumped ten feet high. Then, before he could strangle the invader, it sent an S.O.S. call to all of its relatives, with the result that a rescue party, consisting of seventeen of its big brothers, clattered up the bathing suit's legs. Poor Hib! With a sort of hunted look in his bulging eyes, he started on a bow-legged gallop for the canal, where the bees were finally drowned. Not, however, until each of them had carved its complete initials on Hib's bare skin.

As for Bid, that gallant leader had a sweating time untangling himself from the ladder. Free at last, he scooted for the canal like a comet—only what he had for a "tail" wasn't meteorites, as we read about in geographies, but a swarm of stabbing honey harvesters.

That afternoon the enemy sat on the canal bank making mud patties for their aching spots. And you should have heard the growling! The leader was a dumb-bell, they said. For no one but a dumb-bell would have started the bee smoker without having first shut up the bees in the tree.

"Aw, dry up!" Bid finally threw at them. "You fellows make me sick."

"I'd rather be sick than like this," suffered Hib

Milden, standing spraddle-legged against a tree. "I can't walk around and I can't squat."

"Let's go home," came the suggestion from another one of the disgusted bee hunters.

"Go home if you want to," flared Bid. "But I'm going to stay here and kill those bees if it's the last thing I do."

And that is exactly what he did do. We had intended, in getting the wild honey, to hive the bees, feeling that they were worth money to us. But it was good-by bees now. Waiting until they had gone into their tree for the night, the enemy leader stuffed the hole full of rags and then pumped the tree full of sulphur smoke.

"To-morrow morning," we overheard him tell his gang, "we'll chop the tree down and get the honey."

CHAPTER XVII

AN EXCITING NIGHT

WELL, with the bees killed, and Bid Stricker telling around as big as cuffy what *he* was going to do the next morning, I sort of hinted to the leader that we had better get busy and do a little something ourselves. Otherwise, instead of getting the wild honey, as we had set out to do, we were liable to end up with a handful of what the little boy shot at.

But he didn't seem to be at all worried. Instead, he stepped around as merry as you please.

"Tra-la-la!" he sang.

"What's the idea of all the tuneful 'Tra-la-la!' business?" I went after him.

"I've got a scheme, Jerry."

"One of those distinctly *original* no-ghost schemes that you were spouting about, I suppose."

"Nothing else but," he laughed.

"It must be funny."

"Funny? Say, if it works out as I think it will, we'll laugh for a month."

"I don't know as I could laugh any more than I did this afternoon," spoke up Red, still tickled over the show that the enemy had unknowingly put on for us.

Scoop chuckled.

"The bees made them hump, all right. But just wait until they get a dose of *hornets*. Oh, baby!"

"*Hornets?* What do you mean?"

"Can you imagine anything funnier," the leader then spread out his scheme, "than to have them chop down a treeful of hornets?"

"I'd hate to be one of the choppers," I shrugged.

"That's it exactly. And my scheme, as you can see, is to fill them so full of stingers that they'll be only too glad to clear out for home, as some of them wanted to do this afternoon."

"But who's going to put the hornets in the tree?"

"Me," he laughed.

"You'll need a pair of tin pants."

"Yah," said Red, "and if one of the hornets gets inside where the bare skin is, you'll need a can opener, too."

Scoop then asked me to lead him to the place where I had seen the three hornets' nests that

morning, for it was his intention to use these nests in his trick.

"There they are," I told him, when we had to come to the rocky gully.

He flashed his light on one of the hanging nests.

"It doesn't look very peppery," he laughed.

"You'll think it's peppery if you put your finger in the hole in the bottom."

At mention of the hole, he examined it closely, rolling a paper cork to fit it.

"Golly Ned!" he snickered, giving the corked nest a shake. "Listen to 'em purr."

"You'll 'purr,' " I backed off, "if they get a crack at you."

Borrowing my pocketknife, he cut the nest down, limb and all.

"Hold it, Jerry," he shoved the sizzling mess at me.

"I'd sooner hold dynamite," I told him. But I took it, nevertheless.

All three nests corked and cut down, the next trick, the leader told us, was to get the nests into the bee tree unbeknown to the Strickers. Fortunately the moon was banked with clouds. So we weren't afraid of being seen. Still, we gave the campers plenty of time to get to sleep.

The St. Louis kid's rope still hung in the bee tree. And after telling us in whispers just what to do, the leader went up the rope, hand over hand. Pretty soon we got his signal. So we tied one of the nests to the loose end of the rope and up the nest went out of sight. After a bit the rope came down again. Then another nest went up; then the third one. It wasn't long after that before the leader slid to the ground. He had dropped the uncorked nests into the hollow tree, he told us gleefully; after which, of course, he had stuffed the rags back into the hole.

"I've got a hunch," he giggled, as we started off, our job done, "that there's going to be some peachy fun around this neck of the woods tomorrow morning."

Arriving at the cave, completely tired out after our long exciting day, we got to bed as quickly as we could. But it wasn't to be our good luck to get any sleep right away. For hardly had we gotten into bed before we were disturbed by a scraping, scratching sound on the other side of our stone wall. Convinced that it was the lizard trying to get at us, and, to that point, probably half starved, you can imagine how uneasy we were. True, we were protected by the stone wall. But the stones weren't cemented to-

gether now, as the caveman had fixed them. And how could we know that the big lizard wasn't liable to pry its snout between the rocks and thus pull the whole works down?

"Let's go outside and sleep with the hornets," shivered Red. "For that's a million times safer than staying in here."

Scoop and I had gotten out of bed.

"Do you suppose it *is* the lizard?" the leader asked my opinion, bending down with his ear to the wall.

"What else can it be?"

"But why is it trying to get in *here?*"

"It smells human blood," was Red's suggestion.

Scoop laughed.

"Come over here and let it smell of your feet, Limburger. Maybe you can chloroform it."

That gave me an idea.

"We've been wanting to capture it," I spoke to the leader. "So why not go after it like a bee."

"What do you mean?"

"Smoke makes bees groggy, doesn't it?"

"Sure thing."

"All right. Why not smoke the lizard? And

when it gets groggy, we'll flop it into its box. See?"

"Hot dog!" yipped the leader. "This has been a day of real ideas for you, Jerry."

A squeak came out of the bed.

"If you call *that* a real idea, cough syrup is good for corns."

"Tra-la-la!" sang Scoop, getting the bee smoker ready. Then he added in nonsense: "Saddle your trusty mounts, my brave comrades. For the big lizard hunt that we have talked about so glowingly is about to begin."

"*Good* night!" Red sank out of sight in the bed. "Some one run out and buy me a harp."

Possibly I should have mentioned before this that the lizard specialist, in starting for home, had left his metal-lined box on the island, hoping, of course, that we would need it. I didn't know where it was hid. But Scoop had seen it. And now the two of us went out and lugged it in.

Red was still in bed when we got back.

"Is it my coffin?" he murmured weakly, when he saw what we had.

"For the love of Pete!" the sweating leader fired at him. "Get up and shut up."

"Why should I get up? If I'm going to die, I might just as well die in comfort. . . . Come

over and smooth the wrinkles out of my pillow, Jerry."

"I'll come over and smooth the wrinkles out of your nose with my fist."

Scoop tried the bee smoker.

"Put some pepper in it," said Red, "And maybe the lizard will sneeze itself to death."

"Cuckoo! We don't want it to die."

"Maybe *you* don't. But, bu-lieve me, *I* do."

The smoker was ready for business now. And moving some of the rocks aside, to make an opening for the metal snout, we pumped the bellows to beat the cars.

"Listen," said Scoop, stopping his work. "Do you hear anything?"

"Yes," came weakly from the bed, "my heart's still beating."

"*You!*" the leader snorted. "I'm talking about the lizard. Can you hear it, Jerry?"

"Not a sound," I told him.

Convinced now that we had done all the smoking that was necessary, we started to tear the wall down. But in the opening that we thus made we could see nothing of the big lizard . . . at first!

Suddenly I let out a squeal.

"Here it comes!"

"Grab it!" yipped Scoop.

"Grab it yourself!" I yipped back, as I jumped for the bed.

"Well," grinned the leader, as he landed beside me, "here we be, as the old lady said at the surprise party, when she sat down on the cake."

"Get off my neck," gurgled Red, from somewhere in the middle of the mattress.

"I thought you were dead," laughed Scoop.

"Cow!"

"Say, Red," grinned Scoop, "get out your paper-wad shooter. For there's a *Heloderma* in the offing. See," and the leader impishly trained his flashlight on the hungry-eyed lizard as it came over the rocks.

"Oh, oh!" Red threw a fit. "We're goners now."

Having crawled through the opening, the big lizard dragged its heavy tonneau across the cave floor. Our lights seemed to attract it. And from the way it opened its big mouth, and sort of smacked its thick lips, we could imagine that it smelt us, too. At least Scoop told Red so!

"Oh, oh!" the latter kept the concert going. "We're goners now."

There was a crunching sound.

"Feel the bed shake," said Scoop, doing everything he could to make it shake.

"Is it the lizard?" gurgled Red.

"Sure thing. It's sharpening its teeth on the iron legs."

And Red was simpleton enough to believe it!

"OH! OH!" he suffered at the top of his voice. Then he turned on Scoop, mad enough to claw the latter's eyes out. "It's all your fault," he screeched. "I told you not to do it, but you wouldn't listen to me. And now see the fix we're in! Maybe we'll all be killed."

This was a lot of fun for Scoop, who began to jump up and down as hard as he could, singing, "Tra-la-la!" at the top of his voice to drown the smaller one out, which, of course, made Red madder than ever.

"Go ahead," he screeched. "Tip the bed over if you want to. I should worry."

"Listen," I tried to silence them. "What's the lizard chewing now?"

"Red's shoes," yipped Scoop. "Good-by lizard!"

"It would be 'good-by lizard,' all right," screeched freckles, "if it ate *your* shoes."

"Tra-la-la!" jiggled Scoop. "Tra-la-la-la-la-la-la-la!"

"BEES!" CRIED HIB, BATTING THE AIR WITH HIS HANDS.

Jerry Todd in the Whispering Cave. *Page* 193

"TRA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA!" bellowed Red, not to be outdone.

Well, it sounds crazy, doesn't it? And, to that point, I guess it *was* crazy. I don't know what got into Red. Maybe he was so scared he was simple. Or maybe he wasn't scared at all! As I say, he has a line of bunk that makes you think he's scared. As for Scoop, that big goof is liable to do anything.

I didn't feel any too easy myself, but still I wasn't scared. For I knew that in a pinch we could beat it for the door, or even throw the mattress on top of the lizard to make our escape that much easier. No, we weren't in any particular danger. And that, I guess, is why Scoop acted the monkey. He was trying to make an already silly predicament still sillier.

Crawling around the cave, the lizard finally came to its own box, which, to our good fortune, was turned on its side. And I wish you could have seen the big hunk then! Maybe it got a whiff of its own smell. Anyway, it stopped right there and curled up inside of the box, acting for all the world as though it had struck its little home-sweet-home at last, after which, of course, it was no trick at all for us to flop the box over and lock it.

CHAPTER XVIII

MORE "CANNIBAL" STUFF

RED and I wanted to lie abed the following morning, to make up some of the sleep that we had lost. But Scoop got us up at the usual time.

"Breakfast," he called, playing a tune on the rim of the flapjack pan with a spoon.

"You can bring mine around about ten-thirty," yawned Red, turning over for another snooze.

"A dipper of cold water for you, kid," threatened the leader, "if you aren't out of there in two minutes."

"I'd rather sleep than eat," grumbled Red. But with the "cold-water" threat hanging over him, he got up.

"You should have seen the Strickers when *they* rolled out," laughed the cook.

"Were you over there?" I asked him.

"Sure thing. And of all the grumbling and growling! There isn't a fellow in the camp who hasn't at least six stings. Hib Milden came out

of his tent waddling like an old snapping turtle with wooden legs. Bid's face looks like a balloon —he can't see out of one eye at all. Oh, they're a happy bunch—I guess not! I almost felt sorry for the poor simps when I thought of what's coming. Still, they had no business butting in on us: They aren't getting any more than they deserve."

"The joke will be on us," I said, "if the hornets that you put into the tree got out over night."

"No chance of that. For there's only one hole in the tree. And I stopped that up good and proper."

"How about old General Debility?" said Red, when we were mowing away the flapjacks. "Are we going to give him a flapjack, too?"

"Why not?" joked the cook. "And if he doesn't like it, we'll poach him on egg."

Red looked around the cave.

"Boy," he laughed, "we sure had an exciting time here last night."

"Yah," I told him, "exciting and crazy, both."

"What's the matter?" laughed Scoop, as he and Red exchanged winks. "Didn't you enjoy our 'Tra-la-la-la!' duet?"

I tapped on the side of my head.

"Cuckoo!" I told them.

"I feel like I could do some more singing. this morning," said Red, puffing out his chest.

"Try it, if you want me to flatten the frying pan over your head."

Breakfast over, we put in the rest of the morning across the island watching the tree choppers. Boy, did they ever sweat! For swinging an axe, let me tell you, is real work. One kid would chop awhile, then another would take his place. How lovely, we thought, for them to do all this hard work for us!

Down came the tree at length, with an awful crash. The limbs were then trimmed off with the axe, after which job Bid told his workers how to use the steel wedges that had been brought along for splitting the trunk open.

It was noon now. So the sweating workers stopped to eat. At the same time the three of us crept back to the cave for a few bites. We didn't take time to do any cooking, though, for we were afraid we might miss some of the fun.

Having driven a row of eight or ten wedges into the tree trunk, the workers finally got the trunk split open, which gave them something to shout about.

"Hot dog!" cried Hib Milden. "I can see honey."

"Tons of it!" yelled another kid.

"Just look at it!"

"Um-yum!"

"And think of all the money we can get for it."

"A hundred dollars, I bet."

"Maybe two hundred."

They were all hanging over the tree. And suddenly they began to duck and dodge.

"Hey!" yipped Bid. "What was that?"

"Bees!" cried Hib, batting the air with his hands. "More bees."

"Bees, your granny," danced the leader. "It's *hornets!*"

Jimmy Stricker jumped clean over another kid's head.

"Ouch-h-h-h!" shrieked the stabbed one, hanging to his rear parts. "I'll tell the world it's hornets."

"Look at 'em pouring out of the crack! There's millions of 'em."

"Run, fellows," screeched the leader. "If you don't, they'll sting us blind."

Well, funny as it had been the day before, it was ten times funnier now. For everything was working out to our plan. *Laugh?* Say, I never laughed so hard in all my life. Scooting

for the canal, his lay-back pompadour standing out straight behind, the St. Louis kid tripped and fell, rolling over and over in the sand like a big pumpkin. And then maybe you think he didn't get *his*. Oh, mamma! Every time he tried to get on his hind legs, an old gee-whacker of a hornet would whizz along on high gear and biff him a crack on the snout, knocking him down again. He roared like a bull with a burr under its tail.

Yes, and your own little Jerry Todd and his gang did some roaring, too, if anybody happens to ask you about it! We thought we were safe. We thought the hornets wouldn't notice us in the bushes. But those hornets, let me tell you, had spyglasses. And getting quick sight of us, they landed on us like a ton of brick. One old grandpa hornet who had practiced up a lot with his dagger zipped at me and whanged me a death blow on the end of the nose. Nor did he stop at that, either. Backing up to get a fresh start, he cracked me one over the right eye. Boy, did I ever howl. It's a wonder that the Strickers didn't hear me.

Scoop and Red were getting it, too. So the three of us picked up our feet and got out of there in a hurry. The hornets kind of helped

us along. It wasn't any fun now. It was fun to see the Strickers get it, knowing that it was all in our favor. But it wasn't any fun to get it ourselves. My nose was swelled up like a young balloon. I had to stand on tiptoe to see over it. My eye was swelled up, too.

After that, Bid couldn't hold his gang together. Go back to that bee tree? Not for all the honey in the world, they told him. So far as bee hunting was concerned, they were *through.* Absolutely and nothing else but.

To prove that they meant business, they began pulling down their tents and throwing stuff into the boats. Bid kept arguing with them, trying to coax them to stay, but the mutineers, as they might well be called, paid no attention to him other than to yell at him to shut up.

Finally the three loaded boats pulled away, to later turn out of sight in the canal in the direction of Ashton. And thus left in complete possession of the island, with all it contained, we joined hands, dancing a sort of jubilee jig on the beach.

But how to get rid of the hornets—that was the problem. It was lovely to have them drive the enemy away. But they didn't have the good sense now to put up their dripping swords and retire.

"Jerry," laughed Scoop, getting an idea, "do you remember the time we burnt the old auto tires in your back yard?"

"We smoked out the whole neighborhood," I grinned.

"And your pa took a shingle to you, huh?"

"Yah," I grinned, feeling of my seat, "I remember that, too."

"Well, we're going to use auto tires on the hornets."

"And smoke them out?"

"Sure thing."

"But where are we going to get the tires?"

"Peg's uncle has a whole pile of them in a shed where he tinkers automobiles. I saw them the other day when I was there. We've got to go up the canal, anyway, to get the tub raft. And how easy for one of us to go on in the canoe and get a load of tires. That'll be a good job for you, Jerry."

The others went with me as far as the hidden creek camp, telling me, when we separated, that they would hurry back to the island with the tub raft. I was to hurry, too, they said, so that they wouldn't have to wait on me.

Dipping my paddle in deep even strokes, my thoughts taking various turns, I suddenly noticed

a rowboat coming toward me in the canal from the direction of Steam Corners. There was a man in the boat. And at closer sight of him I almost fell out of my canoe. A half-naked man! Can you imagine that? And right there in broad daylight! His back was painted red and green, the red being put on in circles and the green in stripes. Big brass rings hung in his ears. And his hair was twisted into little pig-tails.

I wondered at the curious sight until I got a look at the rower's face. And then I was knocked dumb with amazement. The man with the sleeping toe! I recognized him the moment I caught sight of his "preacher" cheek whiskers, now daubed full of paint, red paint on one side and green paint on the other. There was more paint of the same kind on his arms and breast. A lady's fur cape was fastened around his waist, hanging to the knees. But below the knees the bare legs were painted up as fancily as the rest of the naked body.

There was a flash of recognition in the man's eyes as he caught sight of me. And instantly a long snaky arm shot out and took hold of my canoe. Realizing my peril, I tried to jump into the canal to save myself. But I wasn't quick enough.

"Um. . ." purred old Joshua Jerusalem, as he dragged me into the rowboat. Holding me by the neck, he felt me over sort of greedy-like. "Um. . ." he purred again, licking his mouth like a hungry pup.

Boy, did I ever sweat! For I saw clearly enough what I was up against. Having escaped from the Steam Corners jail, he was now as crazy as a loon. And actually believing that he was a cannibal—his toe having woke up, of course!—he was going to do some fancy cooking on the island, with me and the flour and shortening all mixed up together in one big hunk.

CHAPTER XIX

THE KING OF ENGLAND

Having dragged me into his rowboat, in the manner described, the cannibal, as I shall now call him, tied my hands and feet. And all the time that he was twisting the rope into knots he kept smacking his lips.

But after a few minutes I got over the worst part of my scare. For it wasn't as though I had to fight him all alone. Scoop and Red would be on the island when we got there. And how easy for them to rush in and rescue me!

Let the old dumb-bell smack his lips, I thought. He wasn't going to have half the fill-up that he imagined. About the time he got ready to carve the "roast," there wouldn't be any "roast" there.

We were close to the big wide waters now. And suddenly I pricked up my ears. Hot dog! Some one was coming down the canal in a motor boat. Now I wouldn't have to wait on my chums to be rescued. I'd let this motor-boat fellow do the rescue stuff right away.

But that is where I got left. For what do you know if the cannibal, well posted on his surroundings, didn't turn into the hidden creek out of sight. Two or three minutes later the motor boat hummed past our front door. And I saw then that it was the rich kid and Bid Stricker. I suppose I could have yelled to them. But I decided not to do that. For what was the sense, I thought, of jumping out of the frying pan into the fire?

Passing us again, after having gone up the canal as far as the lock, the engine suddenly began to miss fire and finally gagged itself to death a short distance from our hiding place. The rich kid tinkered the engine for three solid hours, Bid trying to help, of course, but it was a lot *he* knew about motor-boat engines! Finally, though, they got the engine started again. And opening the throttle, they roared out of sight into the big wide waters.

The cannibal had been close to me all this time. And if I *had* yelled for help I probably would have gotten a biff on the bean. Or maybe he would have tried the gentle little trick of clamping his snaky fingers around my windpipe. No thanks, I told myself. The better plan, by far, was to wait and let my chums rescue me.

Making sure that the coast was clear, the cannibal went back into the canal again. It was dark when we came to the wide waters. But I could see the island. And in looking ahead, trying to locate my two chums, it puzzled me to understand why there was no light of any kind on the south shore. For that was where the bee tree was. And surely the tub raft had been taken there. Still, I concluded, Scoop and Red probably had put out their lights upon hearing the enemy's motor boat so close by.

Landing in his usual place on the island's north shore, the cannibal jumped out of the boat and ran into the bushes. Thus given a chance to escape, I tugged at my wrist and ankle ropes. But to no success.

Then I called Scoop's name. Sort of low and guarded-like. I didn't dast to yell out loud. For if the cannibal heard me, as he was liable to do, there was no telling what he might not do to me. It was better, I concluded, to be safe than sorry.

When the old man came back a few minutes later, he was humming to himself as jaunty-like as you please. And I wondered at the change in him. For on the way to the island he hadn't said more than two words.

"I was lucky," he told me, "to find him to

home in his castle. Fur the last time I telyphoned to him he was over in Italy takin' a tour —a' incognito tour."

This "incognito tour" stuff was all Greek to me. But I decided that the less I said to start a possible argument, the better off I'd be, so I kept shut.

"I telyphoned to him to come over an' eat supper with me," the old man went on—which, of course, was just a "pipe-dream," for there was no telephone on the island. "An' he said he'd be over right away. So now I've got to hurry up an' git supper ready. Fur I don't want to keep him waitin', him bein' the King of England."

I didn't say anything to that, either.

" 'What you goin' to have fur supper, Joshua?' says George, which is the name he lets *me* call him by, us bein' ol' friends. 'Oh,' says I over the telyphone, 'I'm goin' to have stew.' 'Stew?' says he. 'What kind of stew?' 'A special kind of stew,' says I. 'Hunters' stew?' says he. 'No,' says I, 'Jerry Todd stew.' 'Jerry Todd stew?' says he. 'I never heerd tell of it.' 'When you eat it,' says I, 'you'll say it's the best stew you ever tasted.' "

Say! I had taken my capture kind of care-

lessly until now, but at this "stew" talk my hair began to climb stepladders all over my head. Why the dickens didn't Scoop and Red come and rescue me? This was getting too blamed exciting for *me.*

Stooping, the old man cut my ankle rope. Then he took a businesslike grip on my arm.

"You jest come along with me," he ordered sharply.

Thus led across the island to the sandy south shore, I was there tied to a tree, after which the cannibal built a roaring fire on the beach. Going out of sight for a few minutes, he came back with a big iron kettle. I remembered then that he had mentioned this kettle in his talk with me in the cave. Say, it was the biggest kettle I ever set eyes on. It was plenty big enough to hold *me,* all right! When he came into sight, dragging it behind him, I thought it was a garage, or something.

Getting some heavy branches, he fixed up a sort of tripod, from which he hung the kettle over the fire. He had quite a time doing it, for the kettle was not only big but heavy. Finally, though, it was placed all right. And with the flames crawling up around it, he then carried water until it was half full.

All the time this work was going on, I kept waiting for my chums to creep up in the dark and untie me. But as the minutes passed, and they didn't come, I began to get downright scared. What if they had gone across the wide waters to the tow path? Or what if they were waiting for me in the cave? In either case they might not get here in time to save me.

Boy, I sure was sweating now. And when the old man came toward me, after having finished his job of water carrying, I let out a screech like a cornered cat.

But instead of untying me and flopping me into the kettle, he started to make a big fuss over me.

"Why," he purred in his simple way, "if it hain't my ol' friend George. Howdy, George," he bowed. "I'm awful glad you got here in time fur the entertainment. It's goin' to start right away. We're goin' to have the entertainment while the stew's on cookin'."

Of all the crazy old bats! He thought now that I was the King of England. And what do you know if he didn't lead me over to a stump and seat me there in regular king style.

I was dizzy in the swing of things. One minute I was the poor "stew." And the next min-

ute I was the King of England. But I was glad, I want to tell you, that I was the King of England. For that was a million times better than being the poor "stew."

Having put me on my "throne," the old gilly made another low bow, with his right hand on his naked painted stomach.

"Now," he said, backing away, "we'll start the entertainment."

Going behind a tree, to get himself ready for the first act, he presently pranced out into sight with a vine twisted around his head and another one hung on his neck. Painted up as he was, and with his brass rings and pigtails, he sure was a beaut. I had been afraid of him. But now I almost laughed myself silly. Some performer, *he* was.

Calling himself Madame Gigglewiggle, he pranced around like a stage dancer, kicking up his long legs and sort of smirking at me. It was the *craziest* stuff you can imagine. I never saw anything so *simple* in all my life. No one but a crazy man could have done it. Once he kicked so high that he tipped himself over backwards. Getting up, with his head wreath hanging on one ear, he tried it over again. This time he ripped his fur petticoat. That ended the act. For he had to run behind the tree, which was his

"dressing room," he said, to make the necessary repairs.

Coming out again, he said that he was Professor Limberback, the famous Japanese tumbler. Starting this act with a "cart-wheel," he then tried a somersault. Finding that he could get away with this stuff in pretty good shape, he wound himself up and turned a number of somersaults, one after another. Watching him, so weak from laughing that I could hardly sit on the stump, I wondered if he wasn't liable to end up with a broken neck.

"My word!" came a familiar voice, and turning quickly who should I see standing there, in the rim of light, but Professor Clatterby. He was staring in amazement, both at the naked performer and me. "My word!" he said again. "What, may I venture to inquire, is the meaning of this most singular acrobatic demonstration?"

"Stop!" cried the performer, who, having straightened at the first sound of the newcomer's voice, now stood like a tragedian, or whatever you call it, his naked arms folded on his pushed-out breast. "Who are you," he thundered, "who dares to violate the privacy of the king's court?"

At that, the teetering old man looked more bewildered than ever.

"My word!" came dazedly. "I—I am at a loss, sir, to comprehend your meaning."

"Are you the King of China?"

"The King of China? What an extraordinary question! Could I feel that you were in earnest, sir, I would indeed be quite disturbed. But I realize, of course, that you are having your little joke at my expense. No, to answer you in like facetiousness, I am not the King of China. Clatterby is my name—Professor Hebberbloom Clatterby. I am lost, sir, and without food. The ruddy glow of your campfire attracted me, I could fancy, in my hungered condition, that you were preparing food, sir. So I hastened hither."

"Bow to the king," came the severe command.

The Professor blinked.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Bow to the king."

"He wants you to bow to *me,*" I told the bewildered one, with a grin.

"My word!" he stared helplessly.

"Professor Limberback," I said, acting as king-like as I knew how.

"Yes, your majesty."

"The visitor doesn't know how to bow to a king. So you do it for him and bring him over here. Then go on with the entertainment."

"Yes, your majesty."

"My word!" came from the dizzy Professor, as he was led to the "throne." "This experience quite parallels that of the fictitious Rip Van Winkle."

I motioned for him to sit down beside me on the stump.

"Do as I tell you," I whispered to him, "for the old geezer's crazy." Then I raised my voice. "This," I introduced, "is Professor Limberback, the famous Japanese tumbler. Watch him. He's great."

At that, the performer wound himself up for some more somersaults, which gave me a chance to explain the situation to the amazed newcomer.

"My word!" he said, over and over again. "My word! How amazing! How astounding!"

"Reach into my pocket and get my knife," I told him. "That's it. Now cut my wrist ropes."

The performer was too busy showing off to notice what we were doing. Over and over he went like a big pumpkin. His fur petticoat flopped. And what do you know if he didn't somersault clean into the fire! A flying leg struck the tripod. Down came the kettle of luke-warm water on top of him. The fire hissed in its sudden bath like a million snakes. There

was a shower of coals. Bellowing like a branded bull, poor old Joshua staggered into the evening breeze, his fur petticoat smoking, and scooted on high gear for the canal.

Well, just about this time I scooted, too, calling to the Professor to follow me. But I hadn't gone many feet before I tumbled over a boy in the weeds.

"Hey!" cried Red Meyers, getting up and rubbing his neck. "Why don't you kill a guy while you're at it?"

Another head came out of the weeds.

"Hi, Jerry," snickered Scoop Ellery. "What's your hurry?"

I got up.

"You fellows missed the free show," I laughed.

"Oh, no we didn't! We've been lying here taking it all in."

"But why didn't you rescue me?"

"And spoil the entertainment? I should say not. Besides, why should we? You weren't in any danger."

"Like time I wasn't!"

"Shucks! If he had tried to flop you into the kettle we would have been on his neck in a jiffy. Is he really cuckoo, Jerry?"

"I'll tell the world he's cuckoo. At the last, he thought I was the King of England."

"And was the stump your throne?"

"Sure thing."

"From the way he was acting," said Red, "we thought he was trying to make love to you."

I was then told the good news by my chums that they had gotten the honey out of the bee tree.

"When we came back with the raft," said Red, "the hornets had all gone away. So all we had to do was to open up the tree some more and dig out the honey. It took us two hours to carry it to the raft. Boy, we've got tons of it!"

"I guess not tons," laughed Scoop. "But we've got all we can handle. Our big job now will be to get it home."

"Maybe we can raise the scow," I said hopefully.

"I don't think so, Jerry—not without the right kind of tools. For you know how big and heavy it is."

"Gee! I hate to think of going home without it."

"I guess it won't suffer to be left here for a few days."

The Professor, instead of following me as I had told him to do, had wandered down to the canal, where we found him eating honey out of one of the loaded tubs.

"I thought you had gone home," said Scoop curiously.

"My word! I have been hopelessly entangled in this labyrinth of waterways. First I followed one narrow waterway, coming at length to a lock, where, upon engaging the affable operator in conversation, I learned that Tutter was in the opposite direction. Coming back, I again confused the points of the compass. After a number of such futile attempts, having spent two nights on the water, I decided to return to the island and seek the counsel of you boys. And now it would seem, as an added misfortune, that my boat has gone adrift. For, in landing, I left it here. Yet, it is gone."

"Never mind," I laughed. "There's a boat on the other side of the island that you can have. And we'll go a ways with you this time and see that you get headed right."

It was our plan to get to Ashton as quickly as possible. From there we would telephone to the Steam Corners jail keeper. Before morning old Joshua Jerusalem would be back in his cell.

As for the money, we intended, of course, to take that with us.

Leaving Red on guard at the raft, the rest of us hurriedly crossed the island to Bible Cave, the old scientist now overjoyed in the knowledge that his wonderful *Heloderma* had been recaptured at last. Just as we came to the cave, we heard a wild scream near the top of the rocky hill, which was the first we knew that the crazy man was so close by. Rushing into the cave to get our stuff, we found that he had been there ahead of us. His fur cape lay in a wad on the stone floor. And the money was gone!

There was another and closer scream. So, grabbing the lizard box, we got out of the cave as quickly as we could, running down the hill to the north shore. Loading the big box into the crazy man's rowboat, we rowed around the island to the opposite shore, where we found Red shivering like a wet puppy. Having heard the screams, all he could think of, of course, was that we were being murdered.

"All aboard," Scoop sang out, getting into his tub. "Steady, Jerry. And you, too, Red. Remember, she's kind of tippy. And the honey will be a complete loss to us if we do tip over."

CHAPTER XX

PRISONERS

Red was squatted cross-legged in the front tub. The next one was loaded with our camping stuff. The next two had comb honey in them. I was in the fifth tub. Back of me were two more honey tubs. Then came Scoop in the last tub.

None of the honey tubs were filled clear to the top. For honey, as you know, is pretty heavy stuff. So, in loading up, Scoop and Red had spread the weight evenly from end to end, figuring that such a plan would give the raft better balance.

The moon was up now. And we were glad of that. For with the moon to help us, we could paddle a straight course across the wide waters to the channel. With no wind to buck against, and plenty of light, it was going to be a pleasant trip home, all right. Of course, we couldn't travel very fast, having nothing to paddle with except barrel staves with whittled handles. But, to that point, it would be fun, the leader said,

to take our time on the trip, even if we were kept on the canal all night.

Pretty soon we came to the spot where the *Sally Ann* had gone down in the storm. And this started us to talking about the fun that we could have later on raising the sunken boat. Certainly, we had no thought of saying good-bye to it forever. For it had given us a lot of good times. And we intended to save it for future fun. With the right kind of tools, we figured that we could get it up and repair it. And such a job, so like what you read about in real sea stories, would be a corking good adventure in itself.

We had expected that our departure from the island would attract the crazy man to the south shore. But we saw nothing of him. Nor did we hear his screaming voice again.

"I know what makes Jerry so quiet," laughed Scoop, when we had passed the wreck. "He's feeling blue because the box of money got away from him."

"Who wouldn't?" mourned Red, on my side.

The leader having thus brought up the subject, I gave him a quick dig, to the point that the money could easily have been in our pockets if he had listened to me.

"It was fun to pretend that the money was ours," he added. "But we had no right to keep it."

"Yes, it's all right for you to talk that way *now*."

"Wise guy!" was Red's shot. "Alway's smarter than everybody else. 'Oh, no!' " the red-headed one mimicked. " 'Let's not bury the money outside of the cave. Let's keep it right here under the oil stove. For we couldn't possibly find a better hiding place than this.' Huh! We've learned a lesson—eh, Jerry?"

"I'll tell the world!"

"My word!" spoke up the Professor, who was rowing beside us. "What, may I inquire, is the cause of all these discordant animadversions?"

"The crazy caveman had a box of money," Scoop got his voice in first, "and Jerry and Red think they have a right to steal it."

"But you said yourself that we'd take the money home with us."

"Sure thing. But I didn't intend to keep it."

"What *did* you intend to do with it?" came sarcastically from Red. "Buy rubber stove pokers for the Fiji islanders?"

"I was going to turn it over to the law, of course."

"I would have done that, too," I said quickly, "if Dad had said I should."

"As long as we *had* the money," said Red, looking at it the way I did, "we had a chance of keeping it. But now we haven't anything."

"I'm satisfied with the honey," grunted Scoop.

Coming to the channel, we told the Professor that all he had to do now was to keep rowing straight ahead. He'd strike two towns, we said, and the second one would be Tutter.

"You can't possibly lose the way," grinned Scoop, "unless you turn around, or pull your boat over the canal bank into the river."

"My word! I wouldn't do so silly a thing as that."

"I'm not so sure about it," laughed Scoop.

"I beg pardon?"

"Never mind; I was just talking to myself. When you get home, you might let our folks know that we're on the way. And here's hoping that the big lizard doesn't get away from you this trip."

"That makes me think," Red spoke up, when the old man had gone on; "we never found out how the lizard got out of its box in the first place."

"I'll always think," said Scoop, "that the caveman is the guilty party."

"What do you mean?"

"He must have seen us that first night on the island. And when we were all asleep, he probably came snooping. Opening the big box, he was scared out of his wits at what he saw. And then is when the lizard escaped. At least, that's my opinion."

A few minutes later Red saw something up ahead.

"Well, of all things!" he cried. "What do you know if the Professor hasn't gotten turned around already!"

There was indeed a rowboat coming toward us from the direction of Ashton. But we soon saw that it wasn't the absent-minded lizard specialist. Instead, it was a man we never had seen before.

"What in tunket! . . ." exclaimed the swarthy-faced stranger, resting his oars and staring at us. "Is it the Toonerville Trolley?"

Grinning at the joke, our leader asked the other boatman if he wanted to buy some honey.

"Honey?" the word was repeated in a puzzled way.

"We've got four tubfuls."

"What have you boys been doing?" came the good-natured laugh. "Robbing an apiary?"

"It's wild honey," the leader explained. "We got it in a bee tree on Oak Island."

"That's the very place I'm looking for," came quickly. "Is it close by?"

"Sure thing. When you get into the wide waters, just ahead of you, turn to the left. You can't miss it."

"If you're going to camp there," Red piped up, "you'd better look out for the crazy man."

"What crazy man?"

"Old Joshua Jerusalem. He's got the idea in his head that he's a cannibal. So don't let him make soup of you."

"Is this 'crazy man' of yours a tall, dignified gink with bushy cheek whiskers?"

"That's him," Red bobbed. "Do you know him?"

"Slightly," was the evasive reply. Then the man gripped his oars. "Good-bye, boys. Don't eat too much honey and get the stomach ache."

We watched the swarthy stranger until he had passed out of our sight, puzzled to understand who he was. It was queer, we thought, that he should be heading for the island in the dead of night. And more anxious than ever were we now to get to the telephone, for here was added

mystery. As Red said, maybe the two men were accomplices.

Going on, the lookout suddenly signaled to us to slow up.

"We're coming to a camp."

Scoop and I let out our necks.

"I bet it's the Strickers," said the leader. "They're camping here overnight on their way home. And that's how Bid and the rich kid happened to be in the wide waters tonight."

"It's them, all right," I pointed. "For there's their boats."

Red got a bad case of goose pimples in the thought of going past the enemy's camp. But Scoop pooh-poohed at him. Everybody in the camp was asleep, the leader said. So where was the danger?

There was an old abandoned powder house here—a thick-walled log house, set close to the tow path. It had no windows and its only door was almost as heavy as its thick walls. Powder had been stored here when the canal was being built, which, of course, was years and years ago. Within my memory no use had been made of the old house. But now it would seem that the Strickers had taken possession of it, and

probably were sleeping there, for there was only one small tent on the bank.

Suddenly we were attacked in complete surprise from the shore. Eight pirates!—that's what they were. Their spies having been secretly at work, they thus knew that we were headed for home with the wild honey. So, to defeat us, the whole gang had laid for us on green crab apples. And when I confess to you, the weedy canal bank, with wooden swords and as I must, that their aim with the hard crab apples was almost perfect, you can easily enough figure out what happened to us. Cramped in our tubs, we couldn't fight back. To that point, we hadn't anything to fight with. Nor could we escape without upsetting the raft. So, galling as it was to us, we threw up our hands and surrendered.

Bid was the pirate chief. And you should have seen how he was rigged up with a red handkerchief on his head, the same old brass rings tied to his ears, and ink tattooing on his naked breast. He looked the part, all right. No wonder the sight of him sickened me. We'd never hear the last of *this*, I told myself. It was an awful disgrace for us.

"Search 'em for weapons," roared the pirate

chief, following our surrender. "Then drag 'em away to the dungeon and chain 'em to the floor."

One of the smart alecks stuck his dirty paw into our honey.

"Um-yum!" he smacked, licking his dribbling fingers.

Bid swished his sword.

"Git out of there," he roared like a bull. "What right have you got to touch the booty until I have divided it up?"

"It's our honey," said Scoop. "And if you fellows take it, you'll get the worst of it in the end."

That set the pirate chief to roaring again.

"Shut up!" old blood-and-thunder further exercised his sword, "or I'll cut your head off."

But Scoop wasn't cowed.

"Banana oil," he sneered.

"Away with 'em!" roared Bid. "Take 'em to the dungeon, as I tell you, and put 'em in irons."

The "dungeon," of course, was the old log house. Our hands and feet tied, we were dumped into one corner of the building, the whole gang having followed us there to crow over us.

Red groaned.

"Don't let 'em scare you, kid," encouraged Scoop kindly.

"The ropes hurt my ankles."

Patterning after the old sea dog in *Treasure Island,* Bid entertained his gang by swaggering around the room singing the song about "Fifteen men on a Dead Man's chest."

"Say, Bid," said Scoop, when the song had come to an end, "ease up on the kid's ankle ropes, won't you? They're cutting him."

"I should worry," swaggered Bid.

"Aw, have a heart!"

The other's eyes flashed.

"How about that hornet trick? Did *you* guys have a heart when you framed up that trick on us? Yes, you did—*not!* And now it's our turn."

Here Jimmy Stricker weaved across the room in imitation of the leader.

"I suppose you thought we were too dumb to tumble to the fact that the hornets were a trick of yours. I told Bid what I suspected. You kids were hid on the island, I said."

"And so," the enemy leader picked up, with a mean look in his eyes, "*we* did some scheming, too. You were so clever in filling the tree with hornets, we'd just let you fight 'em, we decided,

and get the honey. It would be easy enough to lay for you and take the honey away from you."

In further swaggering around the room, the pirate chief gave himself a tough name.

"Anvil Ike," said he, tapping his puffed-out chest. "Hard-boiled and heartless."

"Half-baked and spineless," said Scoop.

"Blood," said the hard-boiled guy, picking at a red spot on his shirt front.

"Catchup," said Scoop.

"Shut up!"

"Meow!"

"Kid," rumbled old ring-in-the-ears, "you're juggling dynamite when you try to razz *me*. For I'm a cold killer. When I hits 'em, they lay."

"Yah, they lay a rotten egg—like yourself."

Finding that Scoop couldn't be shut up, they started in on me.

"Well, old fish-face," said Jimmy Stricker, "how do *you* like it?"

"Lovely," I said, determined not to whine to them.

"Gritty, hey?"

"Untie me," I dared him, "and I'll show you how gritty I am."

"Aw, I don't want to hurt you."

"No?" I purred.

He laughed.

"You sure saved us a lot of hard work, Jerry. Now, all we've got to do is to tow the honey home and sell it."

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched," I told him.

"You think you can get the best of us, hey?"

"Wait," I bit off.

But that, of course, was all a bluff. For, to tell the truth, I was sick at our defeat. But I was determined not to show it. I wasn't going to be a cry-baby.

We had been in the log house about thirty minutes, when suddenly Hib Milden came in on the run, screeching to beat the cars.

"The honey! It's gone!"

Bid stood paralyzed.

"What's that?" he cried, getting his voice.

"The raft's gone!" cried Hib. "Somebody's stole it!"

Grabbing a lantern, the pirate chief rushed through the door, roaring to his gang to follow him.

"Well, I'll be cow-kicked," said Scoop. "The raft couldn't have drifted away. I wonder who took it."

We were soon to find out. For who should come into the powder house but our fourth chum. We had thought that he was sick in bed at the Steam Corners lock. Yet here he was as big as life! And were we ever tickled to see him! Oh, boy! We could lick the whole world now.

"Peg Shaw!" cried Scoop, recognizing the newcomer the moment the big one stepped through the doorway.

"Where are you?" inquired Peg, unable to see us in the dark.

"Over here in the corner," said Scoop. "Get your knife—*quick!* We're tied."

CHAPTER XXI

THE SNEEZING PIRATES

I LIKE to think of our escape from the powder house. Boy, it sure was bully! And wasn't there a weeping and a wailing when the defeated pirates came back to their dungeon, as they called it, and found three empty roosts!

Bid got ready for battle.

"Come on, gang," he called, when it had percolated into his bean that some one on our side, after getting away with the raft, had come back to free us. "We'll overtake 'em and get the honey back. We can do it. For it's eight of us against four."

The motor of the speed boat refusing to start, they all piled into the three rowboats, after which they shot away in the direction of Ashton, thinking, of course, that we were on our way home with the honey raft.

But it so happens that Peg Shaw, in good strategy, had towed the honey raft *up* the canal, toward the big wide waters.

"Bid won't think of looking for it there," the big one laughed.

"But how are we going to get home?" Red began to worry.

"Take it easy, kid," laughed Peg. "We've got the whole night ahead of us. And we'll manage to get by them somehow."

"Are you going home with us?" Scoop inquired eagerly.

"Sure thing."

"But I thought you were sick," said the leader, looking at the bigger one curiously.

"I *was* sick. But it wasn't scarlet fever. Say, that country doctor sure is some pill pusher! He doctors horses, too!"

We laughed at that.

"Did he give you horse medicine?" Scoop joked.

"I can't say that he didn't," Peg screwed up his face, from which we took it that the medicine hadn't been like candy. "I was out of my head at first. But after that I was all right. Yet, because I itched, he wouldn't let me get up. But this morning Ma sent Doc Leland over to see me. And what do you suppose old Doc said?"

"Too much green-apple pie?"

"Naw. He said I had poison ivy. Got it in the canal."

Peg's eyes stuck out when we told him about the whopping big cave that we had discovered on the island. If nothing came up to prevent us, we said, we were coming back to the island in a few days to go through the cave from end to end, side passages and all. And on that same trip we planned to raise the sunken scow, so that we could take it home with us.

"Jerry hesitates to tell you about the most exciting thing that happened on the island," laughed Scoop.

"What was that?"

"The old guy with the broken mainspring in his head tried to play cannibal with him."

Peg almost laughed himself sick over the "Jerry Todd stew" business.

"Haw! haw! haw! I'll be sorry all the rest of my life that I missed that."

"Jerry was scared to death," laughed Red.

"I helped capture old Joshua an hour or two ago," Peg then told us. "He stopped at Uncle Jupe's house on his way to the island to beg something to eat. We thought he acted queer. And when we weren't looking, he got into my aunt's

bedroom, stealing her winter cape and some brass curtain rings that she had in a box on the dresser. Then he got into Uncle Jupe's paint shed, after which he escaped in one of our rowboats. We didn't know, though, what use he was making of the stolen stuff until we helped the Steam Corners marshal capture him on the island. Say, he was almost naked! Then another man came along—a government detective. *He* was after the crazy man, too, he said—something about a mail swindle, as I understand it—probably that Bible business that you just told me about. In talking with him he told me about seeing you fellows on the canal in a honey raft. So I told Uncle Jupe I'd catch up with you and go on home."

"And when you came to the Strickers' camp," said Scoop, "did you suspect that we were their prisoners?"

"I didn't know at first whose camp it was. But I saw the tub raft, and that aroused my suspicions. Crawling up to the log house, I soon found out the truth. Then I towed the raft up the canal with my rowboat, after which I hustled back here to rescue you."

I suddenly thought of something.

"Say, Peg," I clutched his arm, "did the old

man have the money with him when you captured him?"

"He had a metal box. Was there money in it?"

"I'll tell the world!" I cried. "Almost five thousand dollars."

"The detective tried to open the box, but couldn't. We all wondered what was in it."

We were still talking when the Strickers came back to their camp, the maddest bunch of kids that you ever saw and heard in all your life.

"Listen to 'em scrap among themselves," chuckled Scoop.

"Maybe," laughed Peg, "they'll chew each other up, like the gingham dog and the calico cat."

"Bid would like to chew *us* up, all right," I put in.

"He's blaming the other kids," said Scoop. "That's his old trick. When things go wrong, it's never his fault."

Well, the pirates quieted down after a bit. We were pretty sure that they were getting ready to turn in for the night. So we hurried up the canal to get the raft, leaving Scoop on spy duty near the powder house.

"Hot dog!" the leader laughed, when we came along. "Climb out, fellows, if you want to listen in on some real fun."

"What's happened now?" Peg wanted to know.

"Oh, Anvil Ike got into another tantrum and started pegging stuff. Smarty dodged just in time to escape the pepper shaker, which smashed against the wall, letting all the pepper go into the lantern. And now they're in there sneezing their heads off. Hear 'em?"

"The big boobs," said Peg. "Why don't they come out?"

"They can't," giggled Scoop, "for I roped the door."

We could hear Bid sneezing above everybody else.

"For the love of Mike!" he gurgled. "Who-o-o — kerchoo! — who-o-o — *kerchoo!* — who-o-o—"

"Listen to the hoot owl," giggled Red.

"Who-o-o spilt the pepper?"

"You did," said smarty.

"I—I—kerchoo!—I didn't," Bid denied.

"You did, too. You-u-u—kerchoo!—you threw the pepper shaker at me—kerchoo!—and it broke on the wall."

Bid cracked open his thick skull with an old gee-whacker of a sneeze.

"Listen to Anvil Ike," said Red. "Isn't he the cunning little sneezer?"

"Blood," said Scoop, in ridicule of the pirate chief.

Bid heard this, for we were just outside of the roped door.

"I'll 'blood' you," he roared, "if you don't—kerchoo!—if you don't—*kerchoo!*—KERCHOO-O-O-O!"

"Yah," said Scoop, "Anvil Ike sure is one grand little sneezer. When he hits 'em, they lay."

"He's hitting on all six cylinders now," said Red.

"How about St. Louis," I said. "Listen to *him.*"

"Keep it up, Cliffy," said Red. "Only be careful and don't cough up your stomach."

Well, we took in the fun for ten or fifteen minutes. Then we got into Peg's rowboat and started for home. It was easier for us to ride in the rowboat and tow the raft. We could make better time that way.

As for the sneezers, we knew that they would escape if they tried hard enough.

CHAPTER XXII

BACK HOME AGAIN

THE Strickers got home that morning between ten and eleven o'clock. We saw them come in. They looked pretty sheepish. The rich kid, we learned, was over in Ashton.

We got sixty-two dollars out of our wild honey, which was fifteen dollars and fifty cents apiece. It wasn't any trick to sell the honey. We could have sold twice as much. I hope that some day we'll find another big bee tree.

Old Joshua was taken back to jail. Poor old man! He was crooked, all right, but it's tough to be crazy. I suppose he'll end up in the state insane asylum.

His black toe, of course, wasn't a cannibal's toe. That story was all bunk. What made the stiff toe black was shoe polish. And the story of Walla-Walla was all made up.

Dad says that the law ought to pay us at least a hundred dollars apiece for our part in the old geezer's arrest. But we're all hoping that we

get even more than that. I suppose right now the law is trying to learn the names of the people who sent the money to old Joshua in the first place, so that the swindle can be made right. Maybe we'll get all the money that's left! Crickets! I hope they don't find more than a dozen names. We would be rich then, all right.

The morning we were straining the honey in Scoop's kitchen, with his mother scolding because we had honey all over the doorknobs and everything, Mrs. Tiff came over to give us the benefit of her experience in handling honey and sort of patch up her quarrel with the Ellerys.

"I'm awfully sorry," she told Scoop's mother, "that Mr. Ellery and I had that trouble over the back-yard fence. And to make amends to Howard, my uncle and I are going to present him with an autographed copy of the new book when it comes out."

"Is Professor Clatterby at work on his book?" inquired Mrs. Ellery politely, glad, of course, to be at peace again with her next-door neighbor.

"Oh, yes! And he's working with a great deal of enthusiasm, now that his big lizard has been recaptured—thanks to Howard and his chums."

Here Scoop's little sister came into the kitchen with a tin bug, and when the bug ran across the

floor, Mrs. Tiff jumped three feet high.

"Good heavens!" she held her heaving breast. "I thought it was another lizard. I've stepped on three already this morning. Well, I must get back to my work. And that makes me think, Mrs. Ellery: I wonder if you'd care if I borrowed your curtain stretchers."

"Not at all," assured Mrs. Ellery. "And you may keep them as long as they're needed."

And now comes a funny part of my story. For what do you know if Dad didn't bring a strange man home to dinner the day I got back. He was a peachy man. Kind of fat in the stomach, with a grinning, kid-like face. I liked him right off.

"Jerry," Dad introduced, with twinkling eyes, "I want you to meet an old friend of mine. This is Mr. Randall Cliffe, Sr., of St. Louis."

Well, say, I pretty nearly ker-flopped, as the saying is. So this was the rich man who had bought the island! With all of my surprise, I looked at him curiously.

"Glad to know you, Jerry," said Mr. Cliffe, pumping my limp arm up and down. "I've got a boy just about your size," he added. "He's in the neighborhood somewhere."

"Yes," I said, giving Dad the wink, "I've met him."

"Fine!" said Mr. Cliffe. "I hope you like him."

"Well," I said, not knowing what else to say, "he's an awfully good sneezer."

At that, Mr. Cliffe bursted right out. Say, you should have heard him laugh! *He* knew what had happened up the canal. For Dad had told him the whole story.

"Randall's kind of smart acting," he admitted, in quick seriousness. "And I don't approve of it at all. I'm quite sure that I wasn't like that when I was a boy."

"I'll tell the world you weren't!" said Dad, giving his friend a warm slap on the back.

"I guess," said Mr. Cliffe, sort of thoughtful-like, "that Randall got just what he deserved." He looked into my eyes. "But maybe, Jerry, you'd like to be friends with him. What say? Shall I bring him here to-night?"

"Sure thing," I said, which was the mannerly thing for me to say. "I'll do what's right, if he will."

And that's all for this time. We're going up to the big wide waters in a few days to further explore the new cave and raise the scow. So

far, only our folks know about the big discovery that we made on the island. We're purposely keeping it quiet, for if the news got spread around a thousand people would jump in ahead of us.

Maybe we'll have further adventures on the return trip. And if we do, I'll write it down.

THE END

This Isn't All!

Would you like to know what became of the good friends you have made in this book?

Would you like to read other stories continuing their adventures and experiences, or other books quite as entertaining by the same author?

On the *reverse side* of the wrapper which comes with this book, you will find a wonderful list of stories which you can buy at the same store where you got this book.

Don't throw away the Wrapper

Use it as a handy catalog of the books you want some day to have. But in case you do mislay it, write to the Publishers for a complete catalog.

Jerry Todd and Poppy Ott Series

BY LEO EDWARDS

Durably Bound. Illustrated. Individual Colored Wrappers. Every Volume Complete in Itself.

Hundreds of thousands of boys who laughed until their sides ached over the weird and wonderful adventures of Jerry Todd and his gang demanded that Leo Edwards, the author, give them more books like the Jerry Todd stories with their belt-bursting laughs and creepy shivers. So he took Poppy Ott, Jerry Todd's bosom chum and created the Poppy Ott Series, and if such a thing could be possible—they are even more full of fun and excitement than the Jerry Todds.

THE POPPY OTT SERIES

POPPY OTT AND THE STUTTERING PARROT
POPPY OTT AND THE SEVEN LEAGUE STILTS
POPPY OTT AND THE GALLOPING SNAIL
POPPY OTT'S PEDIGREED PICKLES

THE JERRY TODD BOOKS

JERRY TODD AND THE WHISPERING MUMMY
JERRY TODD AND THE ROSE-COLORED CAT
JERRY TODD AND THE OAK ISLAND TREASURE
JERRY TODD AND THE WALTZING HEN
JERRY TODD AND THE TALKING FROG
JERRY TODD AND THE PURRING EGG
JERRY TODD IN THE WHISPERING CAVE

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers,* NEW YORK

Football and Baseball Stories

Durably Bound. Illustrated. Colored Wrappers.
Every Volume Complete in Itself.

The Ralph Henry Barbour Books for Boys

In these up-to-the-minute, spirited genuine stories of boy life there is something which will appeal to every boy with the love of manliness, cleanness and sportsmanship in his heart.

LEFT END EDWARDS
LEFT TACKLE THAYER
LEFT GUARD GILBERT
CENTER RUSH ROWLAND
FULLBACK FOSTER
LEFT HALF HARMON
RIGHT END EMERSON
RIGHT GUARD GRANT
QUARTERBACK BATES
RIGHT TACKLE TODD
RIGHT HALF HOLLINS

The Christy Mathewson Books for Boys

Every boy wants to know how to play ball in the fairest and squarest way. These books about boys and baseball are full of wholesome and manly interest and information.

PITCHER POLLOCK
CATCHER CRAIG
FIRST BASE FAULKNER
SECOND BASE SLOAN
PITCHING IN A PINCH

THIRD BASE THATCHER, By Everett Scott

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers,* NEW YORK

WESTERN STORIES FOR BOYS

By JAMES CODY FERRIS

Individual Colored Wrappers and Illustrations by
WALTER S. ROGERS
Each Volume Complete in Itself.

Thrilling tales of the great west, told primarily for boys but which will be read by all who love mystery, rapid action, and adventures in the great open spaces.

The Manley Boys, Roy and Teddy, are the sons of an old ranchman, the owner of many thousands of heads of cattle. The lads know how to ride, how to shoot, and how to take care of themselves under any and all circumstances.

The cowboys of the X Bar X Ranch are real cowboys, on the job when required but full of fun and daring---a bunch any reader will be delighted to know

THE X BAR X BOYS ON THE RANCH

THE X BAR X BOYS IN THUNDER CANYON

THE X BAR X BOYS ON WHIRLPOOL RIVER

THE X BAR X BOYS ON BIG BISON TRAIL

THE X BAR X BOYS AT THE ROUND-UP

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers,* NEW YORK

THE WESTY MARTIN BOOKS

By PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

Author of the "Tom Slade" and "Roy Blakeley" Books, Etc.

Individual Colored Wrappers. Illustrated.
Every Volume Complete in Itself.

Westy Martin, known to every friend of Roy Blakeley, appears as the hero of adventures quite different from those in which we have seen him participate as a Scout of Bridgeboro and of Temple Camp. On his way to the Yellowstone the bigness of the vast West and the thoughts of the wild preserve that he is going to visit make him conscious of his own smallness and of the futility of "boy scouting" and woods lore in this great region. Yet he was to learn that if it had not been for his scout training he would never have been able to survive the experiences he had in these stories.

WESTY MARTIN

WESTY MARTIN IN THE YELLOWSTONE

WESTY MARTIN IN THE ROCKIES

WESTY MARTIN ON THE SANTA FE TRAIL

WESTY MARTIN ON THE OLD INDIAN TRAILS

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers,* NEW YORK

THE HARDY BOYS SERIES

By FRANKLIN W. DIXON

Individual Colored Wrappers and Text Illustrations by
WALTER S. ROGERS
Every Volume Complete in Itself

THE HARDY BOYS are sons of a celebrated American detective, and during vacations and their off time from school they help their father by hunting down clues themselves.

THE TOWER TREASURE

A dying criminal confessed that his loot had been secreted "in the tower." It remained for the Hardy Boys to make an astonishing discovery that cleared up the mystery.

THE HOUSE ON THE CLIFF

The house had been vacant and was supposed to be haunted. Mr. Hardy started to investigate—and disappeared! An odd tale, with plenty of excitement.

THE SECRET OF THE OLD MILL

Counterfeit money was in circulation, and the limit was reached when Mrs. Hardy took some from a stranger. A tale full of thrills.

THE MISSING CHUMS

Two of the Hardy Boys' chums take a motor trip down the coast. They disappear and are almost rescued by their friends when all are captured. A thrilling story of adventure.

HUNTING FOR HIDDEN GOLD

Mr. Hardy is injured in tracing some stolen gold. A hunt by the boys leads to an abandoned mine, and there things start to happen. A western story all boys will enjoy.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers*, NEW YORK

THE TED SCOTT FLYING STORIES

By FRANKLIN W. DIXON

Individual Colored Wrappers and Text Illustrations by WALTER S. ROGERS

Every Volume Complete in Itself

NO subject has so thoroughly caught the imagination of young America as aviation. This series has been inspired by recent daring feats of the air, and is dedicated to Lindbergh, Byrd, Chamberlain and other heroes of the skies.

OVER THE OCEAN TO PARIS

In which we meet Ted Scott, daring young American, who flies alone from New York to Paris.

RESCUED IN THE CLOUDS

After his return from Paris, Ted tours the country in his plane, and rescues his chums from a blazing machine a mile in the air.

OVER THE ROCKIES WITH THE AIR MAIL

In this volume Ted Scott goes back to his "first love," The Air Mail Service and is lost in the wilderness of the Rockies through the treachery of his enemies.

FIRST STOP, HONOLULU!

After breaking the world's altitude record, Ted sets out to conquer the Pacific and in a thrilling attempt flies from San Francisco to Honolulu.

THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST FLIERS

Two of Ted's best friends disappear while flying near Porto Rico. After a series of exciting adventures the young air ace rescues them in the nick of time.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, *Publishers,* NEW YORK